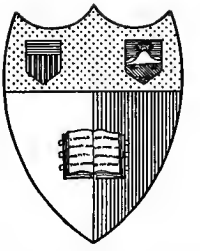

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THE ARK OF GOD.

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The history of the church is fully given in a most interesting volume, "*Memorials of the City Temple,*" by J. BILLARSH, published by *Daldy & Isbister*, London.

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THE ARK OF GOD:

THE TRANSIENT SYMBOL OF AN ETERNAL TRUTH.

WITH VARIOUS PULPIT MATTER.

(*Being Vol. I. of the City Temple Pulpit.*)

BY

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "ECCE DEUS," "THE PARACLETE," "THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST," "A HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW," ETC.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY	1
RELIGIOUS HELP IN NEW CIRCUMSTANCES	26
JUDAS ISCARIOT	40
TWO MOUNTAIN SCENES	66
PAGAN CONSTANCY	77
A PERSONAL REVIEW	103
READINGS IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS	113
PROGRESS OF MANHOOD	136
FAITH	142
CHRISTIAN LIFE AND GROWTH	149
MARY: NEEDLESS TROUBLE	162
JEREMIAH	170
THE SILENT LOOKS OF CHRIST	181
PRESENT TO HEAR GOD'S WORD	192
THE EARLY LIFE OF DANIEL	198
OUTLINES AND NOTES:—	
The Mutilated Bible	217
The Future as Unknown yet Well Known	222

Page

SOLOMON: THE VARIETY OF HIS CHARACTER 227

PRESCRIBED RELIGION 230

HADAD: THE PRESSURE OF DESTINY 233

SUDDEN REVELATIONS 237

TRIED WEAPONS 241

MANOAH'S WIFE 253

JONATHAN'S MORAL COURAGE 264

LIFE WITHOUT MIRACLES 278

HATED FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE 281

WHAT IS LIFE? 284

CONTROL OF THE IMAGINATION A DUTY 296

JOB'S COMFORTERS 301

PARABLES 317

HOMILETICS:—

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF PREACHING 332

PREPARATION OF SERMONS 337

SOME DIFFICULTIES IN PREACHING 342

THE TEXT BOOK 346

ON EXTEMPORANEOUS OUTLINES 349

The Ark of the Testimony:

THE TRANSIENT SYMBOL OF AN ETERNAL TRUTH.

"*Thou shalt put the mercy-seat above the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.*"—EXOD. XXV. 21.

"*And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.*"—REV. xi. 19.

THE object of this discourse is to show that, in a spiritual sense, "the tabernacle of God is still with men upon the earth,"—that the ark of the covenant is yet in that holy tabernacle,—and that the ark is now, as ever, at once the terror and the hope of mankind.

The twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Exodus supplies minute information as to the construction and contents of the ark. The children of Israel had been travelling in the wilderness after their release from Egyptian bondage, and had but recently received the formal law through the ministry of Moses. Up to the time of receiving the commandments they had worshipped under the open sky, and all the host of heaven had seen the manner of their life. In this chapter it is proposed to have an enclosure, a tabernacle, a place screened and roofed, how unsubstantially

soever, which was to be known distinctively as the house of God. This proposition was, indeed, the commandment of God Himself: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take my offering, and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." But was not this a movement towards limitation, instead of a progress outward and onward towards wider spaces, even towards infinitude itself? How if the Divine message had read thus: "Speak unto the children of Israel that I am about to enlarge the sphere within which their life has heretofore been confined; they shall now see the higher and larger stars, and an ampler horizon shall gladden and satisfy their vision"? Instead of this, God proposes the erection of a small house, by which He would seem to shut out all the beauty and most of the light. For the moment, at least, we are disappointed; expansion, not contraction, would have seemed more like the way of God. But think awhile, lest we mistake proportions and meanings which lie out of sight. What we call Infinitude—the quantity which overflows and confounds our imagination—must contract itself, so to speak, if we are to get sight of it; and in this sense the building of the small house, called the Tabernacle, was not a movement towards limitation, but towards concentration and intensity and tender nearness. A man may have all the earth round about him, and yet have nowhere to lay his head; plenty of space, but no home; a universe, but no Sanctuary; infinitude to roam through, but no Father to speak to, and no Heart to rest in. All great

love has to make boundaries for itself; to put itself into little homely acts, and to use words which simple souls can understand. The mother who would die to save her child has to put her great love into a picture, a toy, a babble better than all eloquence. The great ALL must break itself up into the available *Some;* it was but small consolation to the petulant man in the parable to be told, "All that I have is thine;" he wanted some of it to be going on with,—"a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." So, even in our common life, we get hints of things that are going on above.

This tabernacle was built for the reception of the Ark. A wonderful tabernacle it was, as one glance at the specification will show—"Gold, silver, brass, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; goats' hair and rams' skins dyed red; oil for the light; spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense; tables overlaid with pure gold; dishes, spoons, covers, all of pure gold." So God's house was no poor hut run up in an hour or two; but so delicate in its richness and beauty as to be more a thought than a thing. It was no creation of human fancy. Moses was no more left to settle the plan and the furniture than Noah was left to settle the colours of the rainbow. There was not a ring, a knop, a loop, a socket, a coupling, or a pin, which God did not specifically design. It was the same when He made the larger house which we call Nature: there was none with Him when He laid the foundations of the earth, and when He made a tabernacle for the sun He was alone. It is wonderful, indeed, how little there is of man's own doing anywhere. He has undoubtedly hammered a few things

into shape, and brought together a few walls and roofs which he calls cities; but he borrows the foundation from God, and the rivers are not his own, nor is the light other than a visitor sent from God. It is pitiful to see man's work exactly as it is; pitiful to see the shortness of his ladders and what trouble he has to set them up; and it sometimes makes one cry bitterly to watch him falling off the very summit of his victories into the dust out of which he came. He cannot bind the unicorn with his hand in the furrow, nor doth the eagle mount up at his command. He is a servant. Let him know his place and keep it. Take your counsel from God, and ever listen for the voice which says—"And look that thou make it after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount,"—the mount of Suggestion, where we may see in forecast, in gilded and wreathen clouds, what God would have us build for His glory and our own comfort.

As God made a tabernacle for the sun, so He made a tabernacle for the ark, out of which streams a light above the brightness of the sun. The ark of the covenant was a box or chest, say fifty-four inches long, thirty inches broad, and thirty inches high. This box, made of choice wood, was overlaid with pure gold. The lid which covered the box was called the Mercy Seat. Observe that particularly, if you please. Over the lid, or mercy seat, were two golden cherubs, one at either end, facing each other, and covering the mercy seat with their expanded wings. God promised to meet Moses at the mercy seat: "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark

of the testimony,"—a promise which explains the words of the Psalmist, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth;" a tender reference to the olden time, a memory of childhood full of pathetic meaning and tender retrospect. Within the box were placed the two tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written by the finger of God: "I will write on the tables the words that were written in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark." Thus furnished, the ark was deposited in the inner place, in the holy of holies; indeed, in the First Book of Chronicles the holy of holies is called "the house of the mercy seat." So much, then, as a help towards an outward view of the ark of the testimony. A box; a box made of choice wood and covered with pure gold; a box set away in a holy and well-guarded place;—plain enough so far, yet around this box there shall gather meanings deep as the springs of life, and histories full of uproar and tragedy and progress; and in the end the Ark of wood shall be lost, but the Law and the Mercy which it enshrined or symbolised shall be felt to be in a still holier place and in a more enduring sanctuary. Thus, the corruptible shall put on incorruption. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" (Rev. xi. 19). What we call History—the shallow and insecure vessel which holds the dregs, but allows the aroma to escape—says that the ark was destroyed when the Babylonians set fire to the Temple, and declares as a certainty that the ark was not contained in the second Temple. Perhaps not. We need not be curious about the merely material ark. It descended, in idea and purpose,

out of heaven from God, and it was seen amid "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail," in the temple not made with hands,—uncontaminated by the earth which it had blessed, and unchanged in meaning by all the mutations and dangers of its eventful history. Our subject, then, is—The Ark of the Testimony: the Transient Symbol of an Eternal Truth.

I.

The ark may be taken as symbolical of the Divine presence, or the Divine plan in human life. It was a visible form of an invisible power. Again and again in private and public history we come upon a peculiar and almost unthinkable *Something* which focalises and rules all minor administrations; a subtle Something, which makes superstition tremble, and constrains religion to pray; now a hand upon the wall, now as the spell of a dream, a benediction of heavenly sweetness, a judgment pure and terrible as fire;—Something which analysis cannot exhaust, and which scepticism cannot deny. In the ark, for example, you find *law*. See, too, the peculiar place occupied by law: the ark is in the tabernacle; not only in the tabernacle, but in the most sacred part of that sacred place; not only in the holiest part of the holy house, but actually in the *midst* of the ark is found the immutable law of God. Thus we have law at the very centre and heart of things! Not an occasional flash, but a steady, ever-abiding, all-controlling force. Under all surfaces, far below all coverlets woven and arranged by skill of man, deeper than all foam and

tumult and revolution, is to be found righteous and inexorable law! Some call it fate; some, "a divinity that shapes our ends;" some, "God over all, blessed for evermore." But there it is! Creation is held fast together at all points by the grip of law. Not a pebble slips off the edge of the world; not a bird wanders away to another star, though it be the nearest light; no drop of dew trickles into forbidden places; and as for men, in their maddest ambitions they do but strike the bars of their prison, and awake by their frantic impotence the remonstrance, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Sometimes, indeed, the excellency of the wicked has mounted to the heavens, and his head has reached unto the clouds; yet out of this hidden ark there has come a voice of doom—"Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down" (Amos ix. 2). Nor is this a boast which cannot be tested. All history confirms it. To deny the operation of this mysterious and sovereign law is to take away the key without which history is an impenetrable and confounding enigma. Human history is the visible side of Divine revelation. You have *law* at the centre; and you must obey that law in all material things, even though you resist or despise its spiritual demands. You must build your walls by the plumb-line, or they will be thrown down by an implacable power. You may have an atheistic character, but you shall not have an atheistic wall; though the bricks and the stones be banded with iron and cemented with molten lead, yet will they be thrown down if you mock the law which holds up the older masonry of the universe.

In this matter, as in all others, peace can only come by righteousness. That which is at the heart of things is *right:* not something fickle, eccentric, tantalising; but *law,* RIGHTEOUSNESS, GOD!

But, happily, the ark represents something more than law; and every reflective man will acknowledge that in the system within which we live, there is a mystery for which some gentler name than law must be found. The lid of the ark was the seat of Mercy. It signified propitiation, favour, mediation, ground and medium of communion with God. Study that tender symbol a moment, if you please. Law, in coming up from the centre, comes through the lid or covering of mercy; it is, so to speak, attempered, or it would come like a sword, or a fire, or a judgment terrible in righteousness. On the other hand, starting the movement from the outside, in our appeal to law we go through the medium of mercy. We do not, dare not, challenge the law in its own name or on its own merits. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Our approach is through mercy, and our daily prayer is, "God be merciful unto me a sinner." It is most instructive to mark how a life founded as ours is on law, is continually proving the presence of something other and sweeter than law; and it is humiliating to find how easily we exaggerate that tenderer quality, so as to delude ourselves into the belief that law is secondary and impotent. See how law is made almost gracious. Take, as an illustration, the law of hunger,—how terrible, how urgent, how inexorable is that law; how soon it assails the life with consuming fire!

Yet God has made our food more than a mere satisfaction of hunger: He has provided things savoury and dainty in pasture and vineyard, so that hunger brings with it enjoyment and even religious gladness. That which would burn us with unquenchable fire, is attempered and softened and turned into an occasion and process of enjoyment. Yet how true it is that this very attempering and softening of law brings with it temptation and peril! Hence, appetite conquers reason, and the tender mercy of God becomes an occasion of licentiousness and aggravated sin. Take any law of your own nature; see how severe and terrible it is in itself; observe how it is graded and modified, so as to become, not tolerable merely, but enjoyable in its operation; and then say whether we have not every one of us made the goodness of God an excuse for trespass and indulgence.

Thus, then, the ark is symbolical of something we ourselves have known in life apart from specific religious teaching,—something of law, and something of mercy; a power of condemnation, and a power of recovery and healing; a severity very terrible, and a goodness that yearns over our life and offers us redemption. Whether we accept the Biblical names and interpretations of these forces, or laws, or phenomena, there they are, as broad and vivid facts in our daily life; and no sophistry of reasoning, or perversion of fancy, can get rid of their solemn and pathetic operations. The severe winter and the gentle summer; the stormy wind and the still small voice; the bitter pool and the tree which sweetens it; the dark fear and the sunny hope; the herb that stings and the herb that heals,—these things, known to our senses, strewn all over our life

as lessons we ought to learn, show us that this ark, even if only a creation of fancy, symbolises with startling clearness the reality, the grandeur, and the sweetness of life as we know it. This, indeed, is the peculiar glory of the Bible, namely, its marvellous forecast of things as they have turned out to be, and its felicitous representations of the times that were to come upon the world. He would be a churl only, and an unjust man, who would deny at least this literary tribute to the dreamers and seers of the Bible.

II.

We now pass onward to notice a few remarkable points in the history of the ark. In doing this, we shall be more careful about the spiritual teaching than about the mere chronology of that history, and thus we shall secure closer continuity of doctrine and illustration. As our song is to be of mercy and judgment, it will be grateful to us first to see how the mercy of the Lord was revealed amongst His people. Thus :—

"And the Israelites departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey : and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them. . . . And it came to pass when the ark set forward that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered ; and let them that hate thee flee before thee : and when it rested he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel" (Num. x.). And again, though Moses died, yet the ark remained a symbol of mercy in the days of Joshua :—"The officers commanded the people, saying, When ye see the

ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it; yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure; come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore."

Thus the law of human movement is turned into a tender and minute direction by God's condescension. Unquestionably there is a law of movement. We *must* go forward. How? Into darkness? Into danger? Into thickening mysteries that bring with them sevenfold darkness, and trouble that makes the soul afraid? No; we are offered guidance, defence, and rest! "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord"; "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way." The journey was only three days long, yet it must not be taken without the foregoing ark. The people had not gone a certain road before, and therefore they must be accompanied by the sacred symbol of the Divine presence. A flood was ahead of them ("for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest"), and therefore the mercy of the Lord must prevent and defend and mightily save His chosen; so "the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord." A wonderful hint this of the place of what is called Providence, in nature. The ark clears a space for itself everywhere. Strange roads become as familiar scenes, and threatening waters are dried up in the channels they have proudly overflowed. Why should we doubt the mere letter when the spirit of such miracles is attested by evidence so acces-

sible and incontrovertible? Christian missions alone furnish a history radiant with this self-same miracle. Foreign lands have become sweet homes under the benediction of the sacred ark, and hearts that overflowed with contempt and rage have opened themselves in wondrous submission and love to welcome the Lord and His hosts. The same miracle has turned our own life into a marvel and a joy, times without number. Have we not been called to unknown places, and thrown into combinations which have baffled us by their intricacy, and forced into roads which seem to end in darkness? What of the days when we were poor and friendless? What of the first gate ajar that tempted our feet into new pastures? What of the first great sorrow that threatened to swallow us up and to destroy our life as with a flood? Did we not then hear a voice which said, "Ye have not passed this way before"? In proportion as we have been in difficulty and distress, in peril and loneliness, and have seen the delivering hand of God, do we read the record of these old miracles as a familiar language,—not the less real and spiritually *true* because of figures and symbols which to the unsympathetic mind are mere creations of poetry. We ourselves have seen visions, and have felt raptures, which poetry alone could hope to express even in dim and imperfect outline. So much for what has been already known. Ahead of us rolls the overflowing river. "What wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" Arise, O Lord, Thou and the ark of Thy strength, and the waters that I fear shall flee away, and the floods of Jordan shall be as heaps on either side of Thy redeemed and rejoicing servant.

At this point of the history we touch the ark of the covenant with sympathy deep and tender. We ourselves have seen, felt, known, and handled this ark of God. Now and again we have in impious venturesomeness gone forward without it; and what has come of our self-confidence? The imaginary rocks have been as bogs under our feet, and our best devices have lured us into peril. The river has not parted before us, nor has a way been found for us in the desert. On the other hand, we have awaited the rising of the ark, and have followed as it led; and what has been the result? Progress, safety, rest; mountains have been thrown down, and fierce countenances have softened into friendliness and welcomes; we have entered upon a way where no lion lay in wait, nor any ravenous beast could be found,—the way of the Lord's redeemed, upward without steepness, with heaven shining at its end. Well may we say, therefore, that the ark has not been lost: "in the temple of God is the ark of his testament" (Rev. xi. 19). The wood and the gold have perished, but mercy and judgment still rule us from the heavens. "Lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail," still have their place in this earthly life; but in God's temple is seen the "ark of his testament."

As we have thus seen the goodness of the Lord, we may now behold also His severity, as shown here and there in the history of the ark.

(1) You remember the account of the fall of Jericho, and how usual it is to represent the overthrow of the city as almost due (such is the popular impression) to the blast

of "seven trumpets of rams' horns." Out of this circumstance has come much teaching about the possible success of improbable instruments and agencies, as if it was only necessary to have a ram's horn in order to do great wonders in the wars of the Lord. The ark of the testimony was at the taking of Jericho, and *must* be at the taking of every stronghold. "And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord." "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed the priests." "And the rearward came after the ark." "So the ark of the Lord compassed the city." It was not the tramp of priests, or the blast of rude horns, but the ark of the Lord, that brought down the strong wall. It is not our officialism, our music, or our noise, but the name of Christ—the true ark of the covenant—that must bring down the pride of heathenism and all the ramparts of ungodliness. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

(2) Recall a second instance. Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines pitched in Aphek; and Israel was smitten before the Philistines, and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. In dismay, Israel sent to Shiloh for the ark of the covenant, saying, "When it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." So the ark was brought; and when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel

shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And the Philistines were afraid, and said, "God is come into the camp." But the Philistines conquered Israel, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark itself fell into the hand of the enemy; and the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod, and set it in the house of Dagon their god. Israel sent for the ark in extremity, as many a man sends for God in the hour of fear and mortal distress; but the ark would not become the mere convenience of capricious and disheartened men. If we stopped here, mistaking, as hurried readers are apt to do, a semicolon for a period, we should say that the ark was worsted, and that Dagon had triumphed over Jehovah. But, lo, the strong god of Philistia was found in the early morning "fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord"! It was but an accident, mayhap, so Dagon must be lifted up and set in his place again; but the second morning found Dagon in still sadder plight, for his head and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold, and only the stump of Dagon was left to him (1 Sam. v. 4). Many warriors have taken Christ captive; but He has troubled them until they have cried with the Philistines, "What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to His place." Some victories are the profoundest defeats which any cause can sustain. When Christ and Dagon are brought into close quarters, it is Dagon that dies! A man of Benjamin rent his clothes when the ark was taken; when Eli heard that the ark had been borne away, he fell backward and died; and the wife of Phinehas called her

son Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken!" Such is our shortsightedness in looking upon the ways of the Lord. Unchristian men do not know what to make of Christ, even when they suppose themselves to have taken Him prisoner in some fierce war of words. They seize Him as their prey; they condemn Him to exile or death; yet there is something about His name that troubles them, and there is a fire in His words which gives them pain. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," said the falling Dagon. "God is a consuming fire," say all they who intrude upon His throne. How to get rid of Christ—the living Ark—was the urgent question of His enemies! They besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts. "Away with Him! crucify Him!" was the indignant cry. He was slain, yet He is found in heaven; as the symbolic ark was burned by Nebuchadnezzar, yet seen in the temple of God. In the kingdom of God, Destruction is an accident, Ascension is a law. Weep not for the ark, weep for yourselves. "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it" (Isaiah xix. 1). "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; they stoop, they bow down together," for the hand of the Lord is heavy upon them.

(3) A third instance will confirm what has been said about the severity of God. At the bidding of the priests and the diviners, the Philistines sent away the ark, upon a new cart, drawn by two milch kine on which there had

come no yoke, and by the side of the ark they put jewels of gold as a trespass offering. Even then the Philistines were not sure whether it was "a chance that happened" to them, or a judgment direct from heaven. They set a test that they might know this, and the test showed that God had been amongst them of a truth. When the ark came to Bethshemesh, the people were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and when they saw the ark they rejoiced with exceeding joy. But, alas, the men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark of the Lord; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He slew of them a great multitude. Is the Lord ever patient with our foolish curiosity? Can any man *see* God and live? It is precisely here that so many men are slain to-day. We go too near the sun, and we are blinded by the glory we would analyse. God will not submit Himself to our examinations; hence we find thousands of dead critics where there ought to have been a living Church countless as the stars in number! Let there be a space between us and the ark—"about two thousand cubits by measure"—for "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Psalm lxxxix. 7).

4. An incident not remotely related to this scene at Bethshemesh occurred when at the instance of David all Israel went up to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, "to bring up thence the ark of God the Lord." The bringing up of the ark was again the occasion of great joy. The people had not enquired at it in the days of Saul. David's proposition, therefore, revived an ancient and precious memory, and gathered, as by the call of a battle-

trumpet, "all Israel, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath." As the ark was borne away, "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." At one point of the journey the oxen stumbled, and to save the ark from apparent danger, Uzza put forth his hand to keep it in its place. But the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, and there he died before God. Will man attempt to eke out the failing strength of Omnipotence? Doth it become us to watch the stars lest they fall, or to open the clouds at dawn lest the sun should miss his way? Shall we appoint ourselves the special guardians of the truth, and surround it with our defences, lest God should have no foothold on His own earth? God is not to be worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything,—"I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy fields; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." We have written books, and endowed communities, and passed Acts of Parliament, to keep steady the ark of God. Can we wonder that there are so many dead men, who have a name, indeed, to live, but in reality are plucked up by the roots? Sympathy without meddlesomeness, reverence without self-exaggeration, willingness to help without obtrusion of service,—Lord, with this spirit baptize us every one in the pitifulness of Thy great mercy!

III.

We now come still more closely to practical applications. Here and there in the course of the study we have indicated one or two modern bearings of the subject, which admit of obvious amplification. Let us look at one or two others.

The Israelites had a *visible* symbol of the Divine presence so long as they retained the ark in their midst. It was something to look at,—something for the heart to stay itself upon in the time of fear and trouble. But look at our own case. Are we not left without a centre that can be seen, and without a locality sanctified above all other places? We are truly in a great wilderness, but to what shrine can we point men when they mock our faith, and foretell a disastrous end to our pilgrimage? Sometimes, indeed, we find our hearts in a mood of intense longing for the days that are gone; they live backward through the many and cloudy yesterdays until they come upon the exciting times when God spake, as it were, face to face with His loved ones; when the guiding pillar went before the host day and night; when the ark was the signal of movement and the pledge of security; when the "fourth like unto the Son of man" walked in the burning fiery furnace with the faithful, and when the Son of God took little children in His arms and blessed them. To have lived then! To have had the eye filled with His beauty and the ear satisfied with the music of His sweet voice! To have touched the hem of His garment, to have stood within His shadow, to have plucked and kept for ever some poor

flower of the meadow pressed by His feet,—to have seen *something* that was His! So yearns the heart in tender wish and sad regret. And to the world we seem to have nothing. The rain is not ours, for it falleth on the just and on the unjust; the sun is not ours, for it shineth on the evil and on the good. We look into the great voids of space, but no image makes us glad. And there is no rod in our hand with which we can make scoffers afraid because of the wonders of the Lord. Have we not, then, fallen on mean times,—all poetry dead and gone, all music hushed for ever? To such questionings the Scriptures give a distinct reply. They tell us that ours are the brightest and noblest of all the days of time! "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." But the natural man seeth not this glory, neither can he know it, for it is spiritually discerned. "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more" (Jer. iii. 16). Herein is that saying true, "The hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." The local has become the universal, and all things are inscribed—"Holy unto the Lord."

That law and mercy are still at the heart of things is a truth which is acknowledged in some form even by others than Christian believers; but by Christian believers it ought to be ardently and gratefully maintained as at once the glory and the security of life.

We know that there is law;—a law of *continuity*, for all things remain from one generation to another,—the stars do not burn themselves out with all their shining, nor is the sea dried up by the fire of the sun; a law of *development*, for life changes, improves, and matures itself, subtly but certainly; a law of *trespass*, for who can take fire into his bosom and not be burned, or trifle with poison and save his life? We know that there is law round about us, and high above us. What is it that causes ambition to break its billows into harmless foam upon the eternal rocks of Truth and Right? What is it that drives the diviners mad when they seek to misread the writing or forge the signature of God? What is it that throws down the half-built tower, whose summits were to have reached the stars? We are shut in, watched, ruled; and yet we see no Hand moving amongst our affairs. We make our plans, and our programmes read like music; but lo, we never enter the City that lured us, or get near the Tree whose fruit was to have made us wise. Wickedness swells with rage, and comes against the righteous in the fury of its strength; and lo, it staggers, and moans, and dies. The winds blow high and the clouds shut out the light, yet no star is lost, nor is any planet-ship wrecked in the wild storm. If we should fear that some loss may have hap-

pened in that upper sea, all the stars quiet us with the words, "Do thyself no harm, we are all here." There must be some meaning in all this,—in this infinite order, this calm profound which underlies the storm, this vengeance that consumes, this life that cannot die! What is the secret? Can any man name the spell, so baleful yet so gentle? Do not mock us with a word that we shall instantly feel to be hollow and untrue. Speak to us a word that shall, at all events, have a sound of reality in it,—mysterious as if it came up from Eternity, sympathetic as if it issued from a Heart of love. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and THERE WAS SEEN IN HIS TEMPLE THE ARK OF HIS TESTAMENT."

We know that there is mercy;—mercy in the very "process of the suns," for time turns many a bitter pain into a hallowed recollection, and wounds thought to be incurable have been staunched and healed,—mercy in the gifts of nature, for in bread there is sweetness, and the meadow and the garden are full of pleasantness,—mercy in social life, for sympathy puts our misery to sleep, and friendship revives our drooping strength,—mercy in returning slumber, and mercy in the peacefulness of our awaking;—minor mercies, all of them, leading, star-like, to a larger love,—leading to Bethlehem, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, and there merging their secondary rays in the ineffable light, the infinite glory out of which they came. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." "According to his mercy hath he saved us." There are times in our life when the memory of sin is so vivid, and its burden

so grievous, that one cry only can express our necessity and our pain, our self-helplessness and our hope—"God be merciful to me a sinner;" "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." It is at such times that we feel the power of words like these, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," "There is a fouutain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness." All the other mercies that have been softening and beautifying our life, say to us in pleading tones, "If *we* have thus quieted your fears, and set a lamp for you in the time of darkness; if *we* have found for you unexpected help, and surprised you with unlooked-for gladness, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" If you would see Mercy written in largest letters, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" if you would see Mercy in its sublimest attitude, look upon the uplifted dying Son of God; if you would hear Mercy's sweetest, gentlest tone, hear it as Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." What is the meaning of all the mercy which comes down upon our weary life? Is it a transient shower? Are the influences that quicken and bless us, merely fugitive and accidental? Was the Cross the culmination of a rude tragedy? What does Mercy mean? Is it a mere sentiment? Is it a momentary suspension of discipline? Or is it Law in its highest mood? Is it Righteousness weeping? Is it Majesty bowing down from the heavens that

may find the lost? Hear the answer which alone satisfies the judgment and the heart—"The Temple of God was opened in heaven, and THERE WAS SEEN IN HIS TEMPLE THE ARK OF HIS TESTAMENT."

And yet we are not left without a visible sign of God's presence. So long as we have the Bible we have the Ark of the Covenant. The most terrible yet the most gentle of all books is the Bible! Law is in it, and Mercy. It plagues the house, or blesses it, as the house of Obed-edom was blessed when he received the Ark of the Lord into his dwelling. It throws down the Dagon of false worship, of dishonest trade, of false appearances. Yet how it overflows with mercy and promise and hope! It is like a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. It is quiet as a green pasture in the summer noon. It is as a gentle rain on the tender herb, and as showers of blessing on the fainting field. Yet what a sword it is, and how like a fire it burns! Let the bad man look into it for a text with which to sanctify his meanness or falsehood, and it will scorch him with intolerable heat! Let the penitent look into it that he may know how to return unto the Lord, and it will glow with welcomes and benedictions! Let a man fall upon it, and he will be broken; let it fall upon a man, and it will grind him to powder! Verily this book is the Ark of the Testimony. The Babylonian may burn the Book, but he cannot destroy the Revelation. The infidel may take the Book in some controversial war, but it will trouble him until it be released and sent away in honour. Like the Son of man, it is

here, yet it is in heaven. It fears not them that kill the body. Fire will not consume it, nor will the sea hold it in prison. Its name is Wonderful, and the government is on its shoulder. "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and in his temple was seen the ark of his testament."

[The study of the history and symbolism of the Ark of the Lord which we have just concluded will assist us in the analysis and application of the individual texts which make up the narrative given in the foregoing discourse. In that narrative the texts are given as the names of cities are given in large maps; in the two outlines which follow they will be expanded as to represent some idea of the cities themselves. There are maps of England, and there are maps of London; in the former, London is but a name printed in capitals to indicate geographical position and relation; in the latter, London is spread out in all the detail of its endless streets, parks, and squares. So in the foregoing discourse the map is geographical; in the two outlines it will be topographical.]

Religious Help in New Circumstances.

"*Ye have not passed this way heretofore.*"—JOSHUA iii. 4.

IT is very wonderful how the element of novelty seems to penetrate our whole life, so that though we are surrounded by the old conditions we are always about to do something new. The things which we do may be like one another in certain broad features, yet they may be contradistinguished by fine lines of difference so minute and delicate as to be seen only by the closest attention. In the discrimination and right estimate of such lines lies the difference between a life that is lived roughly and a life that is finely balanced and critically calculated and arranged in every detail and bearing. Actions that look very like one another may be subtly and even vitally dissimilar; not obviously so,—and therein lies the fallacy

of mere appearances. We often speak of the wonderful variety that there is in nature ; for example, that no two blades of grass are absolutely alike, and that one star differeth from another star in glory. It is just so in human actions and social relations ; it is the *variety* of our life that cheers our days, and the delicate surprise which challenges our wonder that keeps us in a state of pleasant expectation. Life is not made up of great shocks and revolutions, but of changes often imperceptible except to the most patient and reverent attention. You say you have gone down a certain road a thousand times ; possibly so ; and yet you have not travelled that road twice under precisely identical conditions ! Time, health, companionship, mental mood, condition of feeling, work to be done, —these, and innumerable other facts, have not, all of them, fallen into exact re-combinations. Has there not always been something which has made each journey different from all the others ? Now it is just here that the wise man parts from the fool : the fool lumps things, and talks about them in rough averages ; the wise man observes fibrous changes, and founds his reasoning upon punctilious variations of purpose and method. The right use of this observation leads to religious dependence and religious aspiration ; thus the possibility of realizing religious help in new circumstances is the subject of our present inquiry and meditation.

1. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore,"—*therefore do not go until you be assured of the Divine presence and protection.* What is the way ? Is it a new year ? Will you

encounter unknown *time* in your own strength? Is it a new *enterprise*? Dare you challenge the secret resources of *fortune* without any help but your own? Is it a new *discipline?* It may destroy you if you have not bread to eat that the world knoweth not of. The great historical fact upon which you have to rest is that God *has* been with His people in every possible variety of circumstance, and that His love never changes. The Lord said to Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee" (Exod. iii. 12). And to Joshua He said, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee" (Joshua i. 5). This is commonplace, you say. So is bread! It is a commonplace that is needful to the continuance of our very life. We cannot live on that which is merely sensational. It would do you good if you were to turn the commonplaces of Christian truth into really earnest life. This is one of them. Vivify it! Hear how the old sweet music runs—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 5, 6). "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm xxxvii. 5). "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go." "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah xxx. 21). Thus the so-called commonplace is the commonplace of light, of summer, of the autumnal fields and orchards, of daily bread! The practical lesson is, "Pray without ceasing."

2. Ye have not passed this way heretofore,—*it is quite right, consequently, to take new ways and untried paths in life.* Apply this to the duty of exploring distant countries; to the necessity, under every high civilisation, of entering upon new enterprises; and to the discussion of new problems in politics and morals. Or the application of the truth may be directed socially and nationally; thus—(I.) SOCIALLY: new companionships, new alliances, new partnerships; opening up our friendly, conjugal, and commercial life. (II.) NATIONALLY: new compacts, new wars, new laws. We are bound by every consideration arising out of stewardship and responsibility to try new paths and methods; otherwise our five talents will never become ten, and life will become at once monotonous and insipid. In this view of the case, how wide is the area within which Prayer for heavenly wisdom and defence is to operate!

3. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore,"—*there are some particulars in which this must be true even of the least eventful life.* You will perhaps say that the most of lives are uneventful, and that therefore the text would seem to have very narrow personal applications. Uneventful, however, is a relative term, and must be further defined before we make any important admissions as to its proper use. Undoubtedly some lives are full of rapid and startling movement, and to outsiders they seem to be most enjoyable and utterly satisfactory. They look like a variegated landscape, with its sharp peaks, its massive hills, its undulating plains, and its nestling valleys rich with pasture and orchards;

whilst other lives are apparently motionless, dull, inane, and cold. Let us, however, specify a little, lest we confound things that differ.

First: Is it an uneventful thing for a young man to leave his home that he may try to make his way in the world? "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." What a world it is! Full of temptations and hidden snares; men lying in wait to deceive the simple; falsehood apparently getting most of the prizes, and virtue often bruised and contemned! How entangled is the thicket, how piercing the thorns and briars! Will you not cry from this time, "My Father, be the God of my youth"?

Second: Is it an uneventful thing for a man to die? What is beyond? How do we become prepared for the world unseen? Is that world more sharply divided than this; for here the wicked have some enjoyments, and the righteous many pains? Is it true that in this world we really make the next? Is it true that no soul returns from the secret land to amend its ways, and find the path of repentance? Once over the invisible brink, do we come again no more? "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." This is a journey we must all take; we may take it blindly, we may rush upon it madly, or we may so live as to become enabled to say, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

4. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore,"—*the suggestion is not human, but Divine; it is God Himself that proposes to guide and defend the lives of men.* Before we pray, He

answers! Consider how true it is that all the great proposals which have made our life richer and better have come from God, and in no degree from our own poor wit or genius. "It is not good for the man to be alone,"—that is one. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore,"—that is another. "Come now, let us reason together,"—that is a third. And so on throughout all our life. Look attentively through the Bible, and see how remarkably this is confirmed. Our best suggestions are but "lame and impotent conclusions." We have no primary light. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." As God Himself made the proposal, we may "come boldly to the throne of grace," that we may ask for its realization in our own experience. "Ask and it shall be given unto you."

Let us now vary the form of treating some of the subjects referred to in the narrative. Take, for example, the account of the passing of the Jordan as given in the third and fourth chapters of the Book of Joshua. Instead of an architectural structure, let us adopt the better form of an expository reading :—

"And Joshua rose early in the morning . . . and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over."

It is sometimes good to sit down before a difficulty, that we may calmly measure and estimate its whole scope and weight. The children of Israel were kept three days in

sight of the Jordan. Sometimes we rush upon our difficulties in hot blood; but the great solemn difficulties of life are to be encountered with religious calmness. There is all possible difference in moral value between blind force and true strength. See, however, how faith is tried by this long delay. We have been brought here for the express purpose of crossing the Jordan: why did we not go through it at once, and have three days' rest on the *other* side? We came three days since, and still the river is rolling; is there something wrong? surely there has been a miscalculation; for three days we have been in suspense; what if the Lord be weak in this matter, and this be the day of His humiliation! The Lord does, indeed, seem to stop at the very places we like the least. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was dead, He abode two days still in the same place, though two broken-hearted women had sent for Him. And have we not passed through this very experience of lodging immediately in front of the supreme difficulty of our life? Let us not say that some strange thing hath happened unto us, for truly this is the wonderful way of the Lord.

"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

And this "morrow" is always coming upon prepared hearts. The unsanctified man sees nothing of all the mysteries of God. He is "blind, and cannot see afar off." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Will the Lord come to those who have made no prepara-

tion for Him, and will He hasten to houses whose door is shut against His anointed? "Blessed is that servant who when his Lord cometh shall be found waiting." A beautiful law is this, by which Joshua knows the secret of the Lord a full day before it is known by others. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." If the light comes first to the mountains, need the valleys peevishly complain? As a matter of fact, some men are privileged beyond others in insight, and that strange sympathetic anticipation which often assumes prophetic dignity and certitude. Such men are teachers sent from God. The spirit that is in them is a spirit of rulership and command, and their supremacy is allowed without being claimed. Wonderful is the gift of *utterance;* when the poet speaks, we feel that he has said something which we wished to say to ourselves, and which, being said, we know to be wholly true. So, too, there are time-keepers appointed by God. Sometimes we do the right thing at the wrong hour, and thus our blow is wasted in the air. Our impatience would rush upon the Jordan, and we should be drowned. Lord, teach us how to wait; and when Thy commanding word comes, may we all be ready!

"And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap."

Is it not true that in some cases we have actually to plunge into a difficulty before we overcome and subdue it? It would be pleasant to us if all difficulties could be re-

moved several years before we came to them; but this is not the way of the Lord; we come within sight of the difficulty; for three days or more the sound of the overflowing waters deafens our ears; then we move towards the difficulty; we go close to it; we come within a hair's breadth of it, and still it is there! In the strength of the Lord we plunge into it, and it vanishes in the twinkling of an eye. This should bring comfort to every one of us. Is there a soul that has no Jordan in front of it? Not one! Mark for your comfort that every life has its hours of dismay, and its rivers that threaten to engulph; and mark, too, that when we go forward at the Lord's bidding there is not a sea that can drown us, nor a fire that can consume our life. "What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest; thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" In the distance, Jordan is a river of death; when touched, it flees away like a coward that is afraid. See how reasonable this is. Which is greater, the man or the difficulty? the immortal being or the transitory trial? But our greatness is from God, and our immortality is from the Eternal. We must be right, or we cannot be strong. If our providential road lies over hills and seas, the hills and seas must give way. The hill will mock us if we are on the wrong road, but it will become a plain before our feet if we bear the messages of the Lord. "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters."

"And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites

passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

The ark did not move until the last traveller had passed. God's deliverances are not partial, but complete. "He hath triumphed gloriously." When He triumphs, it is "gloriously;" when He pardons, it is "abundantly;" His tender mercies are a "multitude," and His promises are "exceeding great and precious." When did the Lord only *almost* deliver a man? When were His answers less than our lawful prayers? "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The Psalmist rejoiced in this very truth of the remaining ark being the security against the flood; he said of Zion, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." The ark is in the midst of Jordan, so the waters cannot come together. So long as God is in the Church, the heathen rage in furious impotence. That a man stand on dry ground is nothing in itself, but that he stand on dry ground where the river is accustomed to roll is the wonderful work of God. To have water in the great city is a common mercy; to find it rolling from rocks in the desert awakens our surprise, and brings upon us great fear. So in examining human life —that which is commonplace in one history may be miraculous in another. A mercy that may startle me by its unexpectedness, may be nothing to another man, because of differences of condition, estate, health, and prospects. So every life may have a Jordan of its own, a miracle of its own, and a song of its own. Your children may eat their bread without thankfulness because of its abundance; another child may be moved to praise God because of bread

unexpectedly given. Every life has its own miracle. Speaking personally, I have no difficulty about this division of the Jordan. God has divided many a river before my own feet; many a swelling stream, many a threatening sea. Other men may try to explain miracles away, but to me there is no miracle in the pages of Holy Writ which does not fall short of the wonders which I have seen at the hand of the blessed Lord. I would put this on record with a heart full of solemn gladness. In the future I may lose my standing in the Church by sinning grievously against God; yet this will be true for ever, that God divided rivers before my feet, and found for me water in the driest deserts. Praise be to His Name eternally!

"And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day."

These were memorial stones. They were set up as a sign of Divine goodness, and the very sight of them was to keep in memory the holy story through all generations. We impoverish our life by neglecting to preserve our best memories. Thus we do injury to ourselves as well as grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Our very tombstones may be as pillars set in the midst of the last cold Jordan! I sometimes think they are, as I read upon them such words as these, "Suffer little children to come unto me;" "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord;" "Not lost, but gone before;" "Them that sleep in Christ will God bring with Him;" "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" "I am the resurrection

and the life." "What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord,"—and our answer is, That the waters of a deeper Jordan were cut off before the feet of our loved ones, and they passed on dry ground right through into the City of God.

"And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks as they did before."

Are you, as students of history, sufficiently aware what it really is that plays the most important part in the affairs of nations? You will be studying history without a key if you omit the religious element from your investigations. Take religion out of the world, and the old rivers of barbarism and manifold evil will overflow the land. It is the unseen ark that keeps things in their places. It keeps the sea within its line, and draws a boundary around the volcano. Do you know what it is that is keeping you from ruin this moment? It is the ark you cannot see! Let that ark be withdrawn, and the floods will come upon you and utterly destroy your house and your life.

We may now properly inquire, For what purpose was this miracle wrought? Does God work such wonders in the sight of the people merely for the sake of displaying His power and showing the terribleness of His

strength, or was there some purpose to be accomplished worthy of a preparation so august and brilliant? It would not be difficult to show that no miracle recorded in Scripture was ever wrought merely for its own sake. There was an object of corresponding magnitude or use to be realized. Even more might easily be proved, viz., that the object could not have been realized with success so complete apart from the miracle. Miracles were not mere sensations; from a human point of view, they were necessities. For what purpose, then, was Israel brought through the perils of the Jordan? A wonderful sight met the eyes of Joshua. A man stood over against him with a drawn sword lifted high in the air. A shining and mighty figure! He revealed himself as captain of the Lord's host. Why, Joshua thought that he himself bore some such character; who, then, was this armed and formidable warrior, so bright that he seemed to be standing in the sun? The spiritual figure of which Joshua was the visible! What are any of us but types of powers unseen? Was not the tabernacle itself made after a pattern that was shown to Moses in the mount? Even so, we have our prototypes above us; our angels in heaven; our mightier selves behind the veil. A nameless man was this. Yet in reading the Scriptures we come to expect him every now and then. Did he not wrestle with Jacob? Did he not speak to Manoah? Did he not stop up the way of Balaam? Did he not go unto Eli? Did he not come to Daniel through the depths of his sleep? But never would he give up his Name! If we call him God, he ceases to be man; if we call him Immanuel, he will not charge us with folly. But why

was a miraculous way made for Israel through the channel of Jordan? That a great city might be taken captive, and a course of service be entered upon for the Lord. It is for some such purpose that we ourselves have been helped over difficulty and peril! We have been taken wondrously through affliction and loss and solitude, that we might do valiant things for the Lord of hosts.

Judas Iscariot:

A STUDY OF CHARACTER.

IT will help me very greatly in my delicate work of examining the character of the betrayer of our Lord, if there be an understanding between us, that it is not presumptuously supposed on either side that every difficulty can be explained, and that perfect unanimity can be secured on every point; and especially if it be further understood that my object is not to set up or defend any *theory* about Judas Iscariot, but solemnly to inquire whether his character was so absolutely unlike everything we know of human nature as to give us no help in the deeper understanding of our own; or whether there was not even in Judas something that, at its very worst, was only an exaggeration of elements or forces that may possibly be in every one of us. We always think of him as a monster; but what if we ourselves be—at least in possibility—as monstrous and as vile? Let us go carefully through his history, and see. My purpose is to cut a path as straight as I may be able to go, through the entangled and thorny jungle of texts which make up the history of Iscariot; I propose to stop here and there on the road, that we may get new views and breathe perhaps an uncongenial air;

and though we may differ somewhat as to the distance and form of passing objects, I am quite sure that when we get out again into the common highways we shall resume our unanimity, and find it none the less entire and cordial because of what we have seen on the unaccustomed and perilous way. First of all, then, let us try to get a clear knowledge of the character of Judas Iscariot, the disciple, and apostle, and betrayer, of the Son of God.

I. Expository.

"*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*" (John vi. 70).—Who, then, will say that the men with whom Christ began His new kingdom were more than men,—not bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but a princely sort, specially created and quite away from the common herd in sympathy and aim? He chose twelve men who fairly represented human nature in its best and worst aspects,—they represented gentleness, ardour, domesticity, enterprise, timidity, courage,—and one of them was a devil. Not a devil in the sense of being something else than human. Judas was a man like the others, but in him there was a pre-eminent capacity for plotting and attempting the foulest mischief. We are certainly not to understand that our Lord chose twelve men who, with one exception, were converted, intelligent, sanctified, and perfect; nor is it by any means certain that our Lord chose even the most intellectual and influential men that it was possible for Him to draw into His service. I do not know that we are entitled to regard the Apostles as in all respects the twelve

best men of their day; but I think we may justly look upon them as an almost complete representation of all sides of human nature. And as such they utterly destroy the theory that they were but a coterie,—men of one mean stamp, without individuality, force, emphasis, or self-assertion; padding, not men; mere shadows of a crafty empiric, and not to be counted as men. On the contrary, this was a representative discipleship; we were all in that elect band; the kingdom of God, as declared in Christ Jesus, would work upon each according to his own nature, and would reveal every man to himself. A very wonderful and instructive thing is this, that Jesus Christ did not point out the supremely wicked man, but merely said, "One of you is a devil." Thus a spirit of self-suspicion was excited in the whole number, culminating in the mournful "Is it I?" of the last supper: and truly it is better for us not to know which is the worst man in the church,—to know only that judgment will begin at the house of God, and to be wondering whether that judgment will take most effect upon ourselves. No man fully knows *himself*. Jesus Christ would seem to be saying to us—At this moment you appear to be a child of God: you are reverent, charitable, well-disposed; you have a place in my visible kingdom, —even a prominent place in the pulpit, on the platform, at the desk, in the office; appearances are wholly and strongly in your favour, yet, little as you suspect it, deep under all these things lies an undiscovered *self*—a very devil, it may be; so that even *you*, now loud in your loyalty and zealous beyond all others in pompous diligence, may in the long run turn round upon your Lord and thrust a spear into His

heart!—Can it be that the foremost sometimes stumble? Do the strong cedars fall? May the very star of the morning drop from the gate of heaven? Let the veteran, the leader, the hoary Nestor, the soldier valiant beyond all others, say, "Lord, is it I?" Which of us can positively separate himself from Judas Iscariot and honestly say—His was a kind of human nature different from mine? I dare not do so. In the betrayer I would have every man see a *possibility* of himself,—himself, it may be, magnified in hideous and revolting exaggeration, yet part of the same earth heaved, in the case of Judas, into a great hill by fierce heat, but on exactly the same plane as the coldest dust that lies miles below its elevation. Iscariot's was a human sin rather than a merely personal crime. Individually I did not sin in Eden, but humanly I did; personally I did not covenant for the betrayal of my Lord, but morally I did,—I denied Him, and betrayed Him, and spat upon Him, and pierced Him; and He loved me and gave Himself for me!

Of course the question will arise, Why did our Lord choose a man whom He knew to be a devil? A hard question; but there is a harder still—Why did Jesus choose *you?* Could you ever make out *that* mystery? Was it because of your respectability? Was it because of the desirableness of your companionship? Was it because of the utter absence of all devilishness in your nature? What if Judas did for you what you were only too timid to do for yourself? The Incarnation with a view to human redemption, is the supreme mystery; in comparison with that, every other difficulty is as a molehill to a mountain. In your heart of

hearts are you saying, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what manner of man this Judas is, for he is a sinner"? O thou self-contented Simon, presently the Lord will have somewhat to say unto thee, and His parable will smite thee like a sword.

"*The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.*"—I think we shall miss the true meaning and pathos of this passage if we regard it merely as the exclamation of a man who was worsted for the moment by superior strength, but who would get the upper hand by-and-by, and then avenge his humiliation. These words might have been uttered with tears of the heart—Woe will be the portion of that man who betrays me; yea, woe upon woe, even unto remorse and agony and death; the chief of sinners, he will also be chief of sufferers; when he sees the full meaning of what he has done, he will sink under the intolerable shame, he will give blood for blood, and be glad to find solace in death.

And if our hearts be moved at all to pitifulness in the review of this case, may we not find somewhat of a redeeming feature in the capacity for suffering so deep and terrible? Shall we be stretching the law of mercy unduly if we see in this self-torment a faint light on the skirts of an appalling cloud? I do not find that Judas professed or manifested any joy in his grim labour; there is no sound of revel or mad hilarity in all the tragic movement; on the contrary, there is a significant absence, so far as we can judge from the narrative, of all the excitement needful for nerving the mischievous man to work out purposes which

he knows to be wholly evil. All the while, Judas would seem to be under a cloud, to be advancing stealthily rather than boisterously; he was no excited Belshazzar whose brain was aflame with excess of wine—though he, too, trembled as if the mystic hand were writing letters of doom upon the old familiar scenes: so excited is he that a word will send him reeling backward to the ground, and if he do not his work "quickly" he will become sick with fear and be incapable of action; as it is, he has only bargained to "kiss" the Victim, not to clutch Him with a ruffian's grasp. Then came the intolerable woe!

This great law is at work upon our lives to-day. Woe unto the unfaithful pastor; woe unto the negligent steward; woe unto the betrayer of sacred interests; woe unto them that call evil good and good evil;—to all such be woe; not only the woe of outward judgment—Divine and inexorable—but that, if may be, still keener, sadder woe of self-contempt and self-damnation. With such sorrow no stranger may intermeddle. The lesson to ourselves would seem to be this—Do not regard Divine judgment merely as measure for measure in relation to your sin,—that is to say, so much penalty for so much guilt; it is more than that—it is a quickening of the man into holy resentment against himself, an arming of the conscience against the whole life, a subjective controversy which will not be lulled into unrighteous peace, but will rage wrathfully and implacably until there shall come repentance unto life or remorse unto death. Shall I startle you if I say that there is a still more terrible state than that of such anguish as Iscariot's? To have worn out the moral sense, to have become incapable

of pain, to have the conscience seared as with a hot iron, to be "past feeling,"—*that* is the consummation of wickedness. That there is a judicial and outward infliction of pain on account of sin, is of course undoubted; but whilst that outward judgment may actually harden the sinner, the bitter woe which comes of a true estimate of sin and of genuine contrition for its enormity may work out a repentance not to be repented of. If, then, any man is suffering the pain of just self-condemnation on account of sin; if any man's conscience is now rising mightily against him and threatening to tear him in pieces before the Lord, because of secret lapses or unholy betrayals, because of long-sustained hypocrisy or self-seeking faithlessness, I will not hurriedly seek to ease the healthy pain; the fire will work to his purification, and the Refiner will lose nothing of the gold;—but if any man, how eminent soever in ecclesiastical position, knows that he has betrayed the Lord, and conceals under a fair exterior all that Ezekiel saw in the chamber of imagery, and is as a brazen wall against every appeal—hard, tearless, impenetrable, unresponsive—I do not hesitate to say that I would rather be numbered with Judas than with that man.

"*It had been good for that man if he had not been born.*" —Then why was he born? is the question, not of impatient ignorance only, but of a certain moral instinct which God never fails to respect throughout the whole of His intercourse with mankind, and which He will undoubtedly honour in this instance. Take the case as it is ordinarily put; Judas, like the rest of us, had no control over his

own birth; he found himself in a world in whose formation he had no share ; he was born under circumstances which, as to their literal and local bearing, can never be repeated in all the ages of time. So far as we can gather from the narrative, Jesus spoke to him no word of sympathy, never drew him aside, as He drew Peter, to tell him of preventing prayer, but to all appearance left him to be the blind and helpless instrument of the devil, and then said, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." This cannot be the full meaning of the words. Instantly we repeat the profound inquiry of Abram, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He may, and must, transcend our understanding; He will, by the very nature of the case, dazzle and confound our imagination by the unsuspected riches and glory of His many mansions ; but He must not trouble our sense of *right* if He would retain our homage and our love. Personally, I can have no share in the piety that can see any man condemned under such circumstances as have just been described; it is not enough to tell me that it is some other man and not myself who suffers,—a suggestion ineffably mean even if it were true ; but it is *not* true ; I *do* suffer : a tremendous strain is put upon my sensibilities, and I cannot, without anguish, see any man arbitrarily driven into hell. Upon his face, writhing in unutterable torture, is written this appeal, "Can you see me, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, thus treated, weighed down, crushed, damned, by a power I am utterly unable either to placate or resist?" That man may be my own father, my own child, my most familiar friend ; and though he be a stranger, of name unknown, he

has at all events the claim of our common humanity upon me. I have purposely put the case in this strong way, that I may say with the more emphasis that I see no such method of government revealed in the narrative now under consideration. If I saw anything like it in any part of the Word of God, I should say, "My understanding is at fault, not God's justice; from what I know of His method within the scope of my own life, I know and am sure that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne, and that His mercy endureth for ever." I see things that are mysterious, incomprehensible, baffling; I come upon scriptures which utterly defy all scholars and interpreters; but this is the confidence that I have—"*the Judge of all the earth will do right.*" As to the particular expression in the text, two things may be said: first, it is well known that the Jews were in the habit of saying, "It had been good for that man had he not been born,"—it was a common expression of the day, in speaking of transgressors, and did not by any means imply a belief in the final destruction or damnation of the person spoken of; and secondly, *this passage has again and again exactly expressed our own feeling in many crises of our own life:* it must be for ever true that non-existence is better than sinfulness. When the lie was on our lips, when part of the price was laid down as the whole, when we dishonoured the vow we made in secret with God, when we rolled iniquity under our tongue as a sweet morsel,—at *that* time it had been good for us if we had not been born. Such, indeed, is the only form of words equal to the gravity of the occasion;—better we say, again and again, not to have been born than

to have done this ; if this be the end of our being, then has our life been a great failure and a mortal pain. I hold that these words were spoken not so much of Judas the *man* as of Judas the *sinner*, and that consequently they apply to all evil-doers throughout all generations, and are in reality the most tender and pathetic admonition which even Christ could address to the slaves of sin.

We may get some light upon this expression by considering the fact that "it repented the Lord that He had made man." In studying all such passages we must have regard to the order of time. St. Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable;"—so, if we break off our own life at certain points, we shall say the same thing of ourselves ; and if we interrupt human history, so that one fact shall not be allowed to explain another, it would be easy to find sections which would prove alike the disorder and malignity of the Divine government. We know what this means in some of the works of our own hands. Thus, for example : You undertook to build a house for the Lord, and your heart was full of joy as you saw the sacred walls rising in your hopeful dreams ; but when you came to work out your purpose, you came upon difficulty after difficulty,—promises were broken, contracts were trifled with, the very stars in their courses seemed to fight against you, and at length, after many disappointments and exasperations, you said, "It repents me ; it gives me pain, it grieves me, that I began this house." Such is the exact state of your feeling at that particular moment. But other influences were brought to bear upon the situation, resources equal to the difficulty

were developed, and when the roof covered the walls, and the spire shot up into the clouds, you forget your pains and tears in a great satisfaction. You will say that God foresaw all the difficulty of building the living temple of manhood, that the whole case was clearly before Him from eternity; that is, of course, true; but the pain of ingratitude is none the less keen because the ingratitude itself was foreknown. Take the case of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, as an illustration; He foresaw all the triumphs of His cross—all heaven thronged with innumerable multitudes out of every kindred and people and tongue—yet He prayed that the cup might pass from Him, and He needed an angel to help Him in the time of His soul's sorrow. In magnifying God's omniscience we must not overlook God's love; nothing, indeed, could surprise His foreknowledge, yet it grieved Him at the heart that He had made man; and He called upon the heavens to hear, and upon the earth to be astonished, because His children had rebelled against Him!

"*This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*"—It is more to the credit of the Apostles themselves that this should be regarded as an after-thought than as an undoubted conviction, or an established fact, at the time that Judas sat with them at the Paschal Supper, or even at the time that he asked why the ointment was not sold for the benefit of the poor. This is the more evident from the fact that the writer indicates Judas as the betrayer, whereas at the moment of the test his identity was not established. There is no mystery about the insertion of this

explanatory suggestion, for we all know how easy it is *after* a character has fully revealed itself to go back upon its separate acts and account for them by their proper motives —motives unknown at the time of the action, but plainly proved by subsequent revelations of character. This was probably the case in the instance before us : else why did the disciples allow Judas to keep the bag ? Why did they not humble and exhaust him by an incessant protest against his dishonesty ? And why did not our Lord, instead of mildly expostulating, say to Judas as He once said to Peter, " Get thee behind me, Satan "? Here, then, is a great law within whose operation we ourselves may be brought, —the law of reading the part in the light of the whole, and of judging the isolated act by the standard of the complete character. Illustrations of the working of this law will occur to you instantly. Let a man eventually reveal himself as having unworthily filled prominent positions in the Church—let his character be proved to have been corrupt, and then see what light is thrown upon words and deeds which at the time were not fully understood. How abundant then will be such expressions as these in recounting his utterances :—

" He advised prudence and care and very great caution in working out Church plans; he counselled concentration; he deprecated romantic schemes : this he did (as we *now* can see), not that he was a lover of Prudence or a worshipper of Wisdom, but because he was a thief, and he feared that bold and noble schemes would shame him into reluctant generosity."

"He urged that the Church should be built with the least possible decoration or ornament; he spoke strongly against coloured glass and elaborate enrichment: and this he did (as we can *now* see), not that he was devoted to Simplicity or absorbed in spiritual aspiration, but because he was a thief, and feared that every block of polished marble would increase the sum which his respectability would be expected to subscribe."

"He denounced all heretical tendencies in the Christian ministry; he knew heterodoxy afar off; he never ceased to declare himself in favour of what he supposed to be the Puritan theology: and this he did, not that in his heart of hearts he cared for the conservation of orthodoxy, but because he was a thief, and had a felonious intent upon the reputation of independent thinkers whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose."

All this comes out *after* a man has revealed himself as Judas did. But let me also say that the "thief" may be dictating our speech even when we least suspect it, certainly where there may never be such a disclosure as there was in the case of Judas. There are conditions under which we hardly know what influence it is that colours our judgment and suggests our course,—may it not be the "thief" that underlies our consciousness, and so cunningly touches our life as never to excite our suspicion or our fear? We know how subtle are the workings of self-deception, and perhaps even the godliest of us would be surprised to know exactly the inspiration of some of our most fervent speeches,—surprised to find that though the

outward orator seemed to be an earnest man, the inner and invisible speaker is the "thief" that prompted Judas! Who, then, can stand before the Lord, or be easy in the presence of His holy law? It is under such inquiries that the strongest man quails, and that the swiftest of God's messengers humbly prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified."

"*Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you*" (Matt. xxvi. 14, 15). Why should there have been any bargaining, or why should there have been any difficulty about the arrest of Christ? We must look to an earlier verse for the solution. The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, had met for consultation in the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas, and the principal question was, not how they might take Jesus, but how they might take Him "by subtilty," by craft, deceit, guile, as if they would have secretly murdered Him if they could,—murdered Him in the darkness, and in the morning have wiped their mouths as innocent men! Judas would appear to have gone to them secretly, and offered himself as one who knew the haunts and times and methods of Christ; and in doing so he showed the weak and vicious side of his nature, his covetousness, his greed, his love of money,—and herein his guilt seems to culminate in an aggravation infernal and unpardonable. But are we ourselves verily clear in this matter? Are we not every day selling Christ to the highest bidder? When we stifle our

convictions lest we should lose a morsel of bread; when we are dumb in the presence of the enemy lest our words should be followed by loss of domestic comfort or personal honour; when we soften our speech, or hide the Cross, or join in ungodly laughter that we may avoid an ungodly sneer, we are doing in our own way the very thing which we rightly condemn in the character of Judas.

"*Then Judas which had betrayed Him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood: and he cast down the silver pieces in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself*" (Matt. xxvii. 3-5). Is there not a tone in these words with which we are familiar? Is there not, indeed, something of our own voice in this mournful story? Let us look at it carefully:—

"When he *saw*,"—that, at least, is familiar! Not until our actions are set a little off do we see all their relations and all their meaning; in their progress we are too near them to get their full effect; if we take but one step back we shall be affrighted by the very actions of which the doing gave us a kind of frenzied joy. We make our own ghosts. We shut the eyes of our minds whilst we are doing certain things; and when the last touch is given to the deed, we are taught by the bitterness of experience that Temptation destroys our sight and that Guilt restores it. Recall the case of Adam and Eve,—"And the eyes of them both were opened"! Very short and cloudy is the sight of the body: how keen, how piercing, is the sight of

a self-convicted soul! Before that discerning vision the air is full of eyes, and the clearest of all days is dark with menaces and gathering thunders.

"When he saw that he was *condemned.*"—At that moment the surprise of Judas himself was supreme and unutterable: evidently he did not expect that this catastrophe would supervene; he may, indeed, have said to himself—as a man of inventive and daring mind would be likely to say—I am quite sure, from what I have seen of His miracles, that He will prove himself more than a match for all His enemies; He has done so before, and He will do it again; they said they would cast Him down from the brow of the hill, but He went through the midst of them like a beam of light, and when they took up stones to stone Him, their hands were held fast by that strong will of His; He has provoked them to their face, heaped up all their sins before them, taunted and goaded them to madness, and yet He held them in check and played with them as He listed; it will be so again; besides, He may just want a plan like mine to bring things to a point; I will put Him into the hands of these men, then will He shake them off, proclaim His kingdom, drive away the spoiler from the land of the Hebrews, and we shall come into the enjoyment of our promised reward.—Judas may not have used these words, but in effect they are being used by sinners every day! This is the universal tongue of self-deception, varying a little, it may be, in the accent, but in substance the same all the world over; a putting of one thing against another, a balancing of probabilities, an exercise of self-outwitting cunning; a secret hope that something can be snatched out

of the fire, and that the flames can be subdued without undue damage,—this is the method of sinfulness of heart, a method confounded every day by the hand of God, yet every day coming up again to fresh attempts and renewed humiliations.

"When he saw that he was condemned he *repented* himself."—Is there not hope of a man who is capable of any degree of repentance, even when repentance takes upon itself the darker shade of horror and remorse? I know what the word is which is translated "repented," and I remember with joy that it is the word which is used of the son who said he would not go, and afterwards *repented* and went; it is the word which Paul used of himself on one occasion in writing to the Corinthians. But even if the word be rendered "was filled with remorse and shame and despair," I should say, "So much the better for Judas." Under such circumstances I should have more hope of a man who had absolutely no hope of himself, than of a man who could sufficiently control himself to think that even such a sin—infinite in wickedness as it must have appeared to his own mind—could ever be forgiven. It is easy for us who never experienced the agony to say what Judas ought to have done: how he ought to have wept and prayed and sought forgiveness as we now should seek it,—we cannot intermeddle with his sorrow, nor ought we harshly to judge the method of his vengeance.

"*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*"—Not, "I was hurried into this by others;" not, "Others are as much to blame as I am;" but, "I did it, and I alone." Not, "I have made a mistake;" not, "This is a great

error on my part;" but, "I have sinned,"—the very word which he might have heard in his Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son,—the word which our Father in heaven delights to hear! "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, for His mercy endureth for ever." "If thy brother turn again, saying, I repent, forgive him;"—Judas repented himself! "How often shall I forgive him. Seven times. Seventy times seven"! And shall I forgive him the less because his repentance has deepened into remorse, and he has lost all hope of himself? Surely the more on that very account. And if he slay himself because of his sin against me? Then must I think of him with still tenderer pity, nor cloud his memory with a single suspicion. And here let me say, as to the spiritual application of this matter, I have no faith in the moral value of fine-drawn distinctions between repentance and despair; my belief is that until we reach the point of self-despair as to our sin against Christ, we can never know the true meaning or realize the true joy of repentance. That Judas should have slain himself with his own hand is, in my view of the case, wholly in his favour. It must have appeared to him, indeed, to be the only course open to him; floods of tears he could never set against the blood of an innocent man; to cry and moan and weep bitterly, would be just to aggravate the appalling crime. With a stronger light beating on our life than ever Judas was permitted to enjoy, guarded by all the restraints of Christian civilization, living under the ministry of the Holy Ghost, we are by so much unable to sympathise with the intolerable horror which [illegible] the self-control of

the Betrayer of our Lord. So far as I can think myself back into the mental condition of Judas, his suicide seems to me to be the proper completion of his insufferable self-reproach. And yet that self-control was preserved long enough to enable Judas Iscariot to utter the most effective and precious eulogium ever pronounced upon the character of Jesus Christ. How brief, how simple, how complete—"innocent blood"! If the proper interpretation of words is to be found, as it undoubtedly is, in circumstances, then these two words are fuller in meaning and tenderer in pathos than the most laboured encomium could possibly be. Consider the life which preceded these words, and you will see that they may be amplified thus: "I know Jesus better than any of you can know Him; you have only seen Him in public, I have lived with Him in private; I have watched His words as words of man were never watched before; I have heard His speeches meant for His disciples alone; I have seen Him in poverty, weariness, and pain of heart; I have heard His prayers at home; I trusted that it had been He who would have redeemed Israel from patriotic servility; I curse myself, I exonerate Him,—His is innocent blood!" How glad would the Jews have been if Christ had been witnessed against by one of His own disciples! They would have welcomed his evidence; no gold could have adequately paid for testimony so direct and important; and Judas loved gold. Yet the holy truth came uppermost; Judas died not with a lie in his right hand, but with the word of truth upon his lips, and the name of Christ was thus saved from what might have been its deepest wound.

"*Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.*"—At the first glance these words would seem to put the fate of Judas Iscariot beyond all controversy, yet further consideration may show how mercy may magnify itself even in this cloud. Judas is called "the son of perdition;" true, and Peter himself was called *Satan* by the same Lord. And if Judas was "the son of perdition," what does Paul say of all mankind? Does he not say, "We are by nature *the children of wrath*, even as others"? But in this case "the son of perditiou" is said to be "lost;" but does the word *lost* necessarily imply that he was in hell? "We have all erred and strayed like *lost* sheep;" "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was *lost;*" and, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth [Judas repented himself], more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance." It is our joy to believe that wherever repentance is possible, mercy is possible; and it is heaven to us to know that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And are we *quite* sure that there is no ray of hope falling upon the repentant and remorseful Judas from such words as these: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me [and that He gave him Iscariot is clear from the very passage we are now considering] I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John vi. 39)? But there is still more light to be thrown on this great gloom. Take this passage (John xviii. 8, 9): "Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way; that

the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me I have lost none." Now suppose that the ruffians had answered, "No, we will not let these go their way; we will slay them with the sword at once,"—would it follow that Jesus Christ had *lost* His disciples in the sense of their having been destroyed in unquenchable fire? The suggestion is not to be entertained for a moment, yet this is the very "saying" which is supposed to determine the damnation of Judas! As I read the whole history, I cannot but feel that our Lord was specially wistful that His disciples should *continue* with Him throughout His temptation, should *watch* with Him, that in some way, hardly to be expressed in words, they should help Him by the sympathy of their *presence*,—in this sense He was anxious to "lose none;" but He did lose the one into whom Satan had entered, and He refers to him not so much for His own sake as that He may rejoice the more in the constancy of those who remained. But the whole reference, as it seems to me, is not to the final and eternal state of men in the unseen world, but to continuance and steadfastness in relation to a given crisis.

"*This ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place*" (Acts i. 25).—One reputable scholar has suggested that the words "go to his own place" may refer to Matthias, and not to Judas; but the suggestion does not commend itself to my judgment. I think we should lose a good deal by accepting this interpretation. I hold that this is an instance of exquisite delicacy on the part of Peter: no

judgment is pronounced; the fall is spoken of only as official and as involving official results, and the sinner himself is left in the hands of God. It is in this spirit that Peter speaks of Judas :—

> " Owning his weakness,
> His evil behaviour,
> And leaving with meekness
> His sins to his Saviour."

II. Practical.

Such a study as this can hardly fail to be fruitful of suggestion to the nominal followers of Christ in all ages. What are its lessons to ourselves,—to ourselves as Christians, ministers, office-bearers, and stewards of heavenly mysteries ?

1. Our first lesson will be found in the fact that when our Lord said to His disciples, " One of you shall betray me," every one of them began to say, " Is it I ? " Instead of being shocked even to indignation, each of the disciples put it to himself as a *possibility ;* " it *may* be I ; Lord, *is* it I ? " This is the right spirit in which to hold all our privileges. We should regard it as a *possibility* that the strongest may fail, and even the oldest may betray his trust. " Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Do you suppose that there was but *one* betrayal of the Lord once for all, and that the infamous crime can never be repeated ? " I tell you, nay " ! There are predictions yet to be realized—" There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them ; "—" Lord, is it

I?" It shall surely be more tolerable for Judas Iscariot in the day of judgment than for that man! Living in the light of Gospel day; professing to have received the Holy Ghost; ordained as a minister of the Cross; holding office in the Christian Church;—it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. "Lord, is it I?" "In the last days perilous times shall come; men shall be TRAITORS;"—"Lord, is it I?" Governing our life by this self-misgiving spirit, not thinking all men sinful but ourselves, we shall be saved from the boastfulness which is practical blasphemy, and our energy shall be kept from fanaticism by the chastening influence of self-doubt. Looking upon all the mighty men who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience—Adam, Saul, Solomon, Judas—let us be careful lest after having preached to others we ourselves should be cast away. It is true that we cannot repeat the literal crime of Judas, but there are greater enormities than his! We can outdo Judas in sin! "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 32). We cannot sell the body, but we can grieve the Spirit! There can be no more covenanting over the Lord's bones, but we can plunge a keener spear

into His heart than that which drew forth blood and water from His side; we cannot nail Him to the accursed tree, but we can pierce Him through with many sorrows. Judas died by the vengeance of his own hand; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? Judas shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because when he saw the error of his ways he repented himself, and made restitution of his unholy gains; but we have rolled iniquity under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we have held our places in the sanctuary while our heart has been the habitation of the enemy! It will be a fatal error on our part if we suppose that human iniquity reached its culmination in the sin of Judas, and that after his wickedness all other guilt is contemptible in magnitude and trivial in effect. Jesus Christ teaches another doctrine: He points to a higher crime,—that higher crime, the sin against the Holy Ghost, He leaves without specific and curious definition that out of its possibility may come a continual fear, and a perpetual discipline. Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption!

2. Our second lesson is a caution against mere intellectual sagacity in directing the affairs of the Christian kingdom. It is admitted on all hands that Judas Iscariot was far ahead of the other apostles in many intellectual qualities, yet "Judas by transgression fell." How self-controlled he was, how stealthy was his step, how lingering and watchful his cunning! And if Whately and De

Quincey be right in the suggestion that he merely wanted to force the Lord to declare Himself the Prince of princes and make Israel glad by despoiling the oppressor, it discovers the instinct of statesmanship, and shows how his strategic ambition sought to ensnare the Roman fowler in his own net. Judas is supposed to have reasoned thus with himself: This Jesus is He who will redeem Israel; the whole twelve of us think so; yet He hesitates, for some reason we cannot understand; His power is astounding, His life is noble; this will I do, I will bring things to a crisis by going to the authorities and making them an offer; I believe they will snatch at my proposition, and when they come to work it out He will smite them with His great power, and will avenge the insult by establishing His supremacy as King and Lord of Israel.—As a matter of fact we know that this kind of reasoning has played no small part in the history of the Church. The spiritual kingdom of Christ has suffered severely at the hands of men who have been proud of their own diplomacy and generalship; men fond of elaborating intricate organisations, of playing one influence against another, and of making up for the slowness of time by dramatic surprises alike of sympathy and collision. It is for this reason that I cannot view without alarm the *possible misuse* of congresses, conferences, unions, and councils: these institutions will only be of real service to the cause of the Cross in proportion as *spiritual* influence is supreme;—once let political sagacity, diplomatic ingenuity, and official adroitness in the management of details, become unduly valued, and you change the centre of gravity, and bring the Church into imminent peril. Unquestionably

human nature loves dexterity, and will pay high prices for all kinds of conjuring, and loudly applaud the hero who does apparent impossibilities; and from this innate love of mere cleverness may come betrayals, compromises, and casuistries, which crucify the Son of God afresh. Judas looked to the end to vindicate if not to sanctify the means; and this is the policy of all dexterous managers, the very soul of Jesuistry, and a chosen instrument of the devil. I do not pray for a leader, fertile in resource, supple and prompt in movement; my prayer is for a man of another stamp, even for an *Inspirer*, who, by the ardour of his holiness, the keenness of his spiritual insight, and the unction of his prayers, shall help us truthward and heavenward; and under his leadership we shall hear no more about secularities and temporalities, but every action—the opening of the doors and the lighting of the lamps of the sanctuary—shall be done by hands which were first outstretched in prayer. Not the crafty Judas, but the loving John will help us best in all our work; not the man inexhaustible in tricks of management, but the man of spiritual intelligence and fervour, will deliver us most successfully in the time of straits and dangers. Managers, leaders, draughtsmen, and pioneers, we shall of course never cease to want, and their abilities will always be of high value to every good cause; yet one thing is needful above all others—closeness to the dear Lord, and daily continuance in prayer.

Two Mountain Scenes.

"*The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain; and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*"—MATT. iv. 8, 9.

TO this proposition Jesus Christ returned an answer which caused the devil to leave him. He received a great offer, and he declined it with holy sternness. It was truly a great offer,—nothing less than "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;" and the return to be made was sentimental rather than practical, or at least would have been so regarded by any other man than Jesus Christ. The offer was Empire, and the price was Worship. Jesus Christ said *No*, and came down from the mountain as poor as He was when He was taken up. With what ease He could have had "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," and what good He could have done if all things had been under His control! Yet he said *No;* and in after days He who might have been king of the world said, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." So much, you say, for throwing away the great opportunities of life! Read again—

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; . . . and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xviii. 16, 18).

Put these two mountain scenes together, and consider all that has happened between the one occasion and the other. If you thus lay hold of the case in all its bearings, some such thought as this will run through your mind—You can take the world on the devil's terms, so simple, so easy; or you can say *No* to the devil, and come down to poverty, to hard work, to sorrow, to sacrifice, and through that rugged course you can find your way back to the mountain clothed with larger power, even with much of heavenly and earthly dominion put into your hands.

And it comes very much to this in life. To every man the devil is saying, Accept the world on my terms; fall down and worship me, and I will give you riches, fame, power, or whatever you think will make your life happy. Such a temptation comes in some form and in some degree to every heart, does it not? Now in direct opposition to this, Jesus Christ says—Take no thought for your life; seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these prizes and honours, so far as they are good, will be added to you: the devil took me up into an exceeding high mountain, and offered me the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if I would fall down and worship him; I said *No* to his offer, and I came down from the hill to live a life of sacrifice, patiently and lovingly to do the work of Him that sent me; and in

the long run I ascended another mountain, from which I could see more kingdoms and greater than before, and instead of the rulership of one world, all power in heaven and in earth was given unto me: he that would save his life shall lose it, he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it; that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die!

Considering the peculiarities of the human mind, so far as we know them, the appeal of the devil has one supreme advantage over the appeal of Christ—it is not only addressed to the senses, but it promises instant gratification: no time need be lost; there is the prize, and here is the direct road to its attainment! Whereas in the appeal of Christ we come upon all the difficulties of delay and suffering, to which is added a scarcely confessed suspicion of possible miscarriage and disappointment. The devil promises you for to-day; and for to-day Christ seems to promise nothing but tears and thorns and crucifixion. "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that find it." See how true it is in all life that when a prize is within view we are impatient of delay. Thus, if you stifle the expression of your convictions, you may have a certain honour almost instantly; if you utter and defend your convictions, you may have to wait seven years for that same honour! If you lull your conscience into slumber, you make your fortune in a twelvemonth; if you obey your conscience, you may never make a fortune at all! Truckle, and be rich; resist, and be poor; go with the world, and be flattered;

go against it, and be scorned. Who can hesitate between contrasts so broad!

If we call in the moralist to help us in this difficulty, he will probably direct our attention to facts as the best elucidation of principles, and may challenge us to consult the unquestionable and solemn testimony of human experience as a final authority within the region of reason. He will be likely to tell us in the first place that all these promises of short cuts to supreme position and influence are *lies*. He will acknowledge, indeed, that there are short roads to ownership, notoriety, and self-importance; but these he will carefully distinguish from the supremacy that is solid and enduring and beneficent. He will, too, damp the ardour of the young by assuring them that realities are often the exact opposite of appearances, and may startle them still further by the assurance, which he will be able to justify by many examples, that it is possible for a man to be the slave of the very things which he seems to own and rule. Look at the price required for the supremacy offered to Christ—"If thou wilt fall down and worship me"! But consider what it is to worship at the wrong altar! It is to debase the affections, to bring the best energies of the soul under malign influence, and to forfeit the power to enjoy the very things which it is supposed to purchase. Worship expresses, though it may be feebly, the worshipper's supreme ideal of life; if, therefore, it be offered to an evil spirit, the whole substance and course of life will be deeply affected by the error. What if the very act of false worship disqualify the soul for relishing any supposed or undoubted

joy? Offer a man long draughts of the choicest wines if he will first drench his mouth with a strong solution of alum, and what are the choicest wines to him then? They cannot penetrate to the palate, they are absolutely without taste, and they mock the appetite they were meant to gratify. So, if a man put his moral nature under false conditions, and create anarchy between himself and the principle of eternal righteousness, no matter what fortune or honour may accrue to him, his power of serene enjoyment is gone, and he becomes burdened and plagued by his very successes. This will be the first point insisted upon by the moralist; in the plainest words he will say—"The promise is very great, but it is a lie to begin with, and the man who sells his soul to get it will soon find that he is neither more nor less than a dupe of the devil."

But what of the facts which seem to contradict this theory of the moralist? "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree: their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart can wish; they are not in trouble as other men." Do they not seem to have gotten the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? In answering this inquiry the moralist will insist that such facts exactly illustrate what he has just said—viz., that some men are the slaves of the very things which they seem to own and rule. He will contend that technical possession is not full ownership, and he will make his appeal to final and decisive results rather than to temporary appearances and relations. For example, he will acknowledge that the wicked have been in great power;

but he will show that they have "passed away," and that they have not been found even by those who most diligently sought for them; he will acknowledge that the wicked have sometimes had more than heart can wish, but he will prove that they have always been set in "slippery places," and that their "end is destruction." He will not confine himself within narrow limits in giving his judgment, but will include within his survey spaces and times needful for securing a just perspective. It is quite true that "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable;" but if we bring considerations of eternity to bear upon the discipline of time, even now we may have joy, and may even "glory in tribulation also."

Now look at the other side of the case. Jesus Christ resists the temptation to give His soul for gain, and He goes down the hill poor, lonely, and apparently helpless. He brings back nothing but His unimpaired integrity; He is whole of heart,—and that is all you can say about Him, unless you add, what is really the same thing in other words, that His faith in God and His idea of worship are pure and wise. His course seems for a time troubled with the frown and judgment of God, for few friends come to His side, there is no joy in His lot, His work is hard, and the return of His toil is poor. He calls Himself a King, and men laugh at Him; He says He is the Son of God, and men take up stones to stone Him. Is it not, then, quite plain that He lost His chance when He said *No* on the hill, and that He must take the consequeuces of His obstinacy? A man who would so argue would seem to

have a good deal of sound sense on his side; at any rate, he might refer to so-called facts with very emphatic confidence. He might almost feel called upon to treat with positive mockery the words of Christ, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,"—for more obvious irony never provoked the laughter of mankind. And still the shadows thicken upon the gloomy scene; poverty is made poorer by loss upon loss; and further on His oldest friends drop off, and the disciple He loves the most instinctively assumes an attitude of departure. Plainly enough, this Man who set Worship above Empire sacrificed His fortune to His sentiments, and lost a crown to save an idea. If there be anything more on the dark and downward way of His ill-luck, it cannot be other than a Cross—a Cross with aggravations too; and in its agony He will learn that violent sentiments have violent ends. So it would seem! We are told that the earth is round; but there are great crags and pits on its rugged surface for all that. We are told that Christ had a kingdom, when it is quite certain that He had not so much as a home. These are great contradictions, and it is simply in vain for us to try to force a reconciliation; reconciliation can only be wrought, if wrought at all, by time, often long and dreary.

"The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; . . . and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—And there is nothing

of boast or vaunt in the Lord's sweet tone. It is as if the sown wheat had said in golden harvest, "Behold, I have been brought up from the depths of death, and my life is an hundredfold more than before." It is thus, through all the ages, that the good man comes to his strength and crown,—through pain and tears, through nights of gloom and days of toil, and grief that makes the heart grow old, and forsakenness that makes a man afraid of his own voice, so weird and so mournful is life in its emptiness and silence! It is a long way, you see, and some men die before they get a glimpse of its sunny end. How, then, as to the truth of the doctrine that to be right is to be rich? To test that doctrine you must get into the very heart of the sufferer himself. He will show you the compensations of a righteous life; he will tell you how sweet is the bread eaten in secret, how holy and all-comforting is the approval of a good conscience, and how infinite is the independence of the soul whose trust is in God. In such a case the poverty is wholly on the outside: the soul is clothed in more than purple and fine linen, and is rich with more than gold. Outside, things are rough enough undoubtedly; the storm does not spare the roof, nor do the rags keep away the biting wind, yet somehow the man who is right has a quiet and thorough mastery over the circumstances which fret and vex the mere surface of his life. The king is within. The fountain of his joy is not dependent on the clouds, but on "the river of God, which is full of water." "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Whilst all this is true, and is sealed as such by the oath of a number which no man can number, it is also outwardly true, so to speak; that is to say, goodness rises to its right position in the world and takes the throne of supreme and imperishable power. In the last result it is goodness that conquers and rules. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green." "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall see the fruit of their doings." Now and again life suddenly opens, and we see flashes and glimpses of what is coming upon the world. In the midst of tumult and blasphemy, so mad that we think there is no more chance for goodness, we see such homage paid to right as gives hope of its final conviction and universal sway. There are conflicts in which *character* determines the issue. In times of panic *goodness* is relied upon. In affliction and sorrow and ruin, it is the *good* man who is sent for. When the fierce wind throws down strong walls, and the whole air is black with cruel plague and pest, sparing neither old nor young, neither woman nor child, he who *prays* best is king. So, even in the outer world, and in tangible and visible ways, goodness comes to recognition and honour, in addition to its being accompanied by inward and spiritual satisfactions.

After this course of thinking we should be able to set down for human guidance one or two principles which

seem, at least, to reach the highest point of certainty. Such as :—

First: Right ideas of *worship* will show the exact line of personal denial and sacrifice. Be right in heart towards God, and you will know what to do in the time of flattering offers and splendid opportunities.

Second : It is through *temptation* that we learn the true value of many convictions and habits. From our point of view it may seem a small thing to give up worship that we may win kingdoms ; it might seem indeed as if we were getting the kingdoms for next to nothing. The devil did not reckon so. He aims to get our *worship*, for he who has the heart has all !

Third : Self-denial, in the name and strength of God, may be *a long time* in coming to fruition in honour and dominion,—at least visibly, as we have just said. In the case of Christ it took nearly three years to die and rise and ripen, but in its ripening it filled heaven and earth ! "If WE suffer with Christ we shall also reign with him."

Fourth : Whatever we have, much or little, of comfort, or honour, or influence, let it be as a flower ripened in the sun ; something coming up out of a deep true character ; beauty added to strength. Woe to the bloom that is artificial !

In the long run, then, we shall get our right position ; our sorrows will become our joys ; our sacrifices will be turned into our victories ; and, truly, in a sense impossible to express in words, we shall not serve God for nought. To suffer *in the right spirit* is our daily difficulty. It is

easy to suffer defiantly; it is almost comfortable to suffer ostentatiously; but to suffer as if we were not suffering, even with meekness, quietness, and long patience, to enter into the "fellowship" of Christ's sufferings, and to work out our course just as He did, who is sufficient? Bravado will come to nothing. Selfish martyrdom will have no holy resurrection. Morbid pride in the neglect and disparagement accorded by the public will end in no blessing. Unrepining resignation, deep and loving trust in God, earnest diligence in all duty, loyal obedience to every sign of our Father's will,—out of this discipline will come sweetest joys, honours as the stars for number, and peace deep as the calm of heaven.

Pagan Constancy,

CONTRASTED WITH CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY.

"*For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.*"—JEREMIAH ii. 10, 11.

THE text may be put into other words, thus: "Go over to the islands of the Chittim, the isles and coast lands of the far west; then go to Kedar, away in the eastern desert,—go from east to west,—and ask if any heathen land has given up its idols (gods that are no gods), and you will find that no such thing has ever taken place; but whilst the heathen have kept to their gods as if they had real and strong love for them, my people, for whom I have done so much, whose names are on the palms of my hands, whose lives are dear to my heart, have turned away from me, and have given up their living and loving God for that which can do them no good."

There must be some way of accounting for conduct so clearly unreasonable and ungrateful. We may perhaps find

our way to the secret step by step, if we notice one or two things that we ourselves are in the habit of doing. If, for example, I say that there is now a book in my hand, you who can see the book will at once agree with me that such is the fact; but if I add that it is a *good* book, you will wait until you have read it before you say anything about its value. Merely to say that it is a book is to secure unanimity; but to say that it is a *good* book is to open the way for difference of opinion. So, also, if a man say that he will train a young sapling in such and such lines, we may admit that the work is easy and that success will follow it in due time; but if he add that he will as surely train a child as he will train the young tree, we may point out to him that the one task is not so easy as the other, and we may feel sure that facts will soon prove the truth of what we say.

You see, then, that as a question rises in importance it rises also in difficulty, and as it rises in difficulty it opens the way for debate, and makes even ill-will between the debaters an easy possibility. It is in the light of such facts that I would first view the state of things shown in the text. We are told in the text that the heathen has not given up his god; that, find him where you will, in the far west or in the far east, he holds to his god (which is no god) with a firm hand. Quite so; let him have the full credit which is due to him for doing this, but do not overlook the fact that his god is not a god, for in that fact you may have the key of the whole secret. His god is made on a small scale,—it can be seen, it can be measured (in fancy, if not in reality), it can in many cases be pressed to

the heart whose trust it has drawn out. It is, too, a god that will stand a good deal of patronage; and men like in some way (direct or indirect) to have their own god under their own care. But take away the stone, or the wood, or the sun, or the moon—whatever the god may be, and in its place put a thought, or a Spirit, and at once you create danger; you pass into that which is unseen,—so high, so wide, so deep, that no line can be laid upon it ; and for a religion that looked so simple and so direct, you set up a religion that is ghostly and alarming! Tell the pagan that the true God is a Spirit whom no man has seen nor can see, that He fills all space and all time, and you will stun the man ; and as his mind awakens, difficulties will crowd upon him, and new questions will bring new anxieties and tortures to a mind which, never having had a doubt, never really had a faith. The small god meant small difficulty, the infinite God means infinite difficulty. No words can tell all that is meant by His great name; where Speech becomes dumb because it has come to the end of its mean wealth, the music of God's Eternity but begins ; and where Imagination falters, the cloud but begins to rise from God's Infinity. Is it wonderful, then, that life should be harder in Zion than in Kedar, or that infinite mystery should be a heavy burden to finite strength?

If we can make it quite clear that as a subject rises in importance it rises in difficulty, we shall see one side of the text in a hopeful light; and therefore I would keep you one moment longer on the threshold of the great theme. You have no difficulty with your *hand*, but what trouble you have with your *heart!* Why? Because the heart is so

much more than its servant the hand. Your *words* may be well under your control, but what bit and bridle can hold your *thoughts* in check! You can fit the yoke to the beast of burden, and by your will you can make it serve in the furrow; but that sweet child of yours, so fair, so bright, can wound, can break your heart! So it is through and through life. It is easy to be good at Kedar; it is hard sometimes to pray in Zion.

One more illustration will bring us to the subject: We all know how much easier it is to keep up the form of religion than to be true to its spirit. Say that religion is a number of things to be done, some at this hour and some at that, and you bring it, so to speak, within range of the hand, and make it manageable; but instead of doing this, show that religion means spiritual worship, a sanctified conscience, and a daily sacrifice of the will, and you at once invoke the severest resistance to its supremacy. Or say that religion simply means a passive acceptance of certain dogmas that can be fully expressed in words, which make no demand upon inquiry or sympathy, and you will awaken (if any) the least possible opposition; but make it a spiritual authority, a rigorous and incessant discipline imposed upon the whole life, and you will send a sword upon the earth, and enkindle a great fire.

Thus we come back to the same point; that is to say, to the doctrine that importance is the measure of difficulty in all departments and phases of life: the man of renown has more difficulty than the man of obscurity; the man who has deep convictions lives a harder life than the man who is careless about vital questions; horticulture is more

difficult than sculpture ; spiritual teaching is severer than physical training ; the magician is applauded, the Redeemer is crucified ; and, by the same great law, He who is God over all suffers more than all other gods. "Pass over the isles of the Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit."

I.

In view of these hints, and the whole line of thinking to which they belong, I cannot but regard hopefully the earnest and practical religious controversy of the day, feeling as I do that such controversy arises, as if by a kind of necessity, out of the very grandeur of the subject ; out of the demands which religion makes upon the present life, as well as out of the splendid destinies which it offers to the contemplation and acceptance of mankind.

Earnest religious controversy seems to me to be but the higher aspect of another controversy which has vexed man through all time. The study of God is the higher side of the study of *man.* It is a singular thing that man has never been able to make *himself* quite out, though he has been zealously mindful of the doctrine that "the proper study of mankind is man." He wants to know exactly whence he came and what he is; but the voice which answers him is sometimes mocking, and nearly always doubtful. He is not sure whether his years can

be numbered, or whether he has come down from immemorial time. His age puzzles him much. His choice lies between thousands and millions of years. He is sensitive on the question of time. Once he found a piece of pottery deeply buried at the mouth of the Nile, from which he inferred (not then knowing the history of Roman pottery) that he must be, say, a million years old; then he found out—like other old-china dupes—that the pottery had been turned off the lathe of some comparative modern, whereupon he grew young again, and became modest with a sense of relative juvenility. This modesty became him well, and would have bloomed long but for the disturbing fact that he found a flint hatchet in an out-of-the-way place; and thereupon he resumed his antiquity, and gloried in it in many expensive books. Nor has man been less troubled about his body. He has founded colleges upon it, and museums, and learned lectureships, and a profitable profession with many costly branches. He has taken himself to pieces, and written upon the dismembered parts some long hard words; he has made diagrams of himself, ghastly woodcuts, and blood-coloured pictures: and still he is a puzzle to himself; a puzzle in life because he cannot tell how he came to live, a puzzle in sickness because he cannot tell how to get well again, a puzzle in death because he does not know whether so much antiquity should be inhumed or cremated. Once he was satisfied with the absurd physiology of the "Timæus" (for even Plato was not always divine), and then he laughed at the rude guesses of the Greek. A strange course has man passed through, take him body and soul together. His body! He sprang

spontaneously out of the earth ; he evolved ; he developed ; he began existence as a cellular tissue, and fell under infinite obligations to an ethereal fluid; and, in short, he can trace himself back to a "primordial form." When he meets a certain animal he is not quite sure which of them is expected to speak first, and suddenly his face brightens with celestial light, as if "the divinity" had "stirred within" him ! His soul ! According to one ancient (Heracleitus) it "mutated," according to another (Empedocles) it "compounded," another (Anaxagoras) called it *Nous*, another (Diogenes, not the cynic) called it *Air*, and Pythagoras pronounced it a Number and a Harmony,—a judgment in which nonsense is finely set to music. Now, we are not here to ask any questions as to the soundness or unsoundness of any of these theories ; at some of them we may smile as at a child's antics, and some of them we may remit for further consideration ; but looking at them simply as parts of a history, they would seem to establish the fact that *Man* represents a special majesty and grandeur, that his secret is itself a glory, and that not to be able to answer this riddle is itself a tribute to the very powers that are baffled. So the doctrine returns—little importance means little interest, infinite importance means endless controversy.

Is it wonderful that man, who has had so much difficulty with *himself*, should have had proportionately greater difficulty with such a God as is revealed in the Bible? On the contrary, I think it will be found that the two studies—the study of man and the study of God—always go together, and that the ardour of the one determines the intensity of

the other. In this view the text might read thus :—Pass over the isles of the Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see whether the inhabitants thereof have studied the physiology and chemistry of their own bodies; but the philosophers of Christendom have built themselves upon protoplasm. Kedar cared nothing about humanity, and therefore it cared nothing about divinity. When man is not deeply interested in himself it is not likely that he will be deeply interested in God. It will be found, I think, that every study that is keenly pursued has a strong effect upon the study that is immediately higher or otherwise greater than itself, as if no subject were self-terminating, but, contrariwise, part of some larger, though, it may be, imperfectly comprehended question. Thus political economy writes itself up to, and over the line which is supposed to separate it from, morals; and the moralist encroaches upon theology that he may illuminate and justify his highest theories. Thus, in every way, the higher and the lower, the universal and the local, the eternal and the temporary, are in continual interaction, *and there is always something beyond!* The individual fire seeks the universal sun; love of home rises into love of country; patriotism is a peak upon the vaster hill of philanthropy; home missions are the root of foreign evangelization—herein the afflicted Psalmist sang sweetly, "Thy servants take pleasure in the STONES OF ZION, and favour the dust thereof. So the HEATHEN shall fear the name of the Lord" (Psalm cii. 14, 15). It is the same law—the local spreading itself into the universal, the waves of the little sea rising and spreading

until, in billow upon billow, they roll their foam upon the rocks of the INFINITE.

In the doctrine that the very greatness of God is itself the occasion of religious controversy, and even of religious doubt and defective constancy, we find the best answer to a difficulty created by the words of the text. That difficulty may be put thus: If the people of Chittim and of Kedar are faithful to their gods, does it not prove that those gods have power to inspire and retain confidence? and if the people of Israel are always turning away from their God, does it not show that their God is unable to keep His hold upon their occasional love? Such a putting of the case would be valid if inquiry be limited to the letter. But if we go below the surface we must instantly strip it of all worth as a plea on behalf of idolatry. Clearly so; for, not to go further, if it proves anything it proves too much; thus—the marble statue which you prize so highly has never given you a moment's pain; your child has occasioned you days and nights of anxiety: therefore a marble statue has more moral power (power to retain your admiration) than has a child. Your clock you understand thoroughly; you can unmake and make it again, and explain its entire mechanism down to the finest point of its action; but that child of yours is a mystery which seems to increase day by day: therefore you have more satisfaction in the clock than in the child. So the argument in favour of Kedar proves nothing, because it not only proves too much, but lands the reasoner in a practical absurdity.

So I come back to the starting-point. I see the great-

ness of God troubling the nations as the ark of the testimony troubled the Philistines. Even when men pronounce God "inscrutable," they do not get rid of all uneasiness. It must always trouble a thoughtful man to have anything inscrutable pressing upon him and overlooking him. Yet even to say that God is "inscrutable," or that there is something "inscrutable" behind all force, is to be far enough from the old blank atheism. Such a creed admits of hopeful interpretation; it limits human inquiry; it humbles human pride; it makes men silent,—and there is a silence which is akin to worship.

(2) I must now claim to be mindful of the fact that there is a controversy which is both immoral and unprofitable; yet even this vicious and clamorous debate is traceable in some measure to the necessities of the case, for when a depraved heart interprets religion you may expect immorality, and when a depraved genius interprets theology you may expect unprofitableness. The apostle, writing his epistle to the Romans, says of some people, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," and to get rid of Him they would probably indulge in wicked controversy. The text speaks of "that which doth not profit," and reminds us of the danger of taking up controversies without pith, substance, or spiritual nutriment in them. I need not remind you that unprofitable controversy has been the recreation of a certain order of mind—far from contemptible as to capacity and acuteness—from the very beginning of the world; but I must protest against the encouragement of such controversy in the Christian pulpit. One

would imagine that some ministers supposed themselves to be called of God to make as many mysteries as possible. I have no doubt that it is quite within the range of the power of eccentric genius to turn the multiplication-table itself into a metaphysical jungle, and to show by an endless use of unintelligible words how dangerous a thing it is to risk anything upon the seductive but malign proposition that two and two are four. Do you know how exciting it is to live next door to a young analytical chemist, and candidate for membership in a microscopical society? It is a serious trial. His calls are alarming visitations. He has just discovered that in the household water there is something like ·09 per cent. of lead: he has looked at the household bread through a microscope, and he simply forbears to state what he has seen. Altogether, you feel, when he has gone, that he has made a considerable subtraction from your comfort, and sent a general sense of uneasiness through the family. It is much the same, with more serious results, in hearing unprofitable controversy in the pulpit. When it is all over, you have a confused impression that you have been somewhere up in the clouds, that you have heard words which, though it is quite lawful, it is absolutely impossible to repeat; you have, too, a feeling that the less you have to do with religion the better, that to believe it is to be mad, and that to deny it is to occupy an exciting position somewhere between respectability and wickedness. Against such controversy I protest. It is trifling with human life; it grieves the Spirit of God. Earnest controversy I would honour. Out of its friction light will come, and warmth. In its very vehemence and

desperateness I would see the grandeur of a religion whose aspects are innumerable, and the fascination of a truth which is now like a star alone in the dark, and now like a sun which can fill all worlds with light.

II.

The foundation of this argument is, that of all subjects that engage the human mind, religion (whether true or false) is the most exciting ; that in proportion as it enlarges its claims, will it be likely to occasion controversy ; and that, as the religion of the Bible enlarges its claims beyond all other religions, assailing the intellect, the conscience, the will, and bringing every thought and every imagination of the heart into subjection, and demanding the corroboration of spiritual faith by works that rise to the point of self-crucifixion, the probability is that there will not only be a controversy between man and man as to its authority and beneficence, but also a controversy between man and God as to its acceptance ; and that out of this latter controversy will come the very defection complained of in the text, and will come also the vexatious human controversies which may really be but so many excuses for resisting the moral discipline of the Gospel. This is the whole argument. Specially is to be noted that the principal controversy is not between man and man, but between man and God ; our hearts are not loyal to our Maker ; His commandments are grievous to souls that love their ease. The God of grace, rich in all comfort and promise, we do not cast off. We want such a God. But

the God of law, of purity, of judgment, terrible in wrath and not to be deceived by lies, our hearts can only receive with broken loyalty, loving Him to-day, and grieving Him to-morrow. It is in this sad fact that I find the only satisfactory explanation of the slowness of the spread of the Christian kingdom. We are sometimes told that as rocks take a long time to build, and forests a long time to grow, so the kingdom of heaven requires a long time for its establishment upon earth. I cannot accept the analogy. Where does God blame the rock because it does not rise more rapidly? When did God rain fire and brimstone upon the forest because it was slow in growth? On the other hand, God never ceases to blame men for not loving Him. Jesus Christ takes up the same complaint, and mourns, even with broken-heartedness and many tears, that men will not come unto Him for life. Not in rocks and forests can we find the answer to such a difficulty; it is to be found in the heart itself, in the solemn and appalling fact that evil hates good, and resists it even unto the death. Everywhere you see this obstinate resistance. To say that the Christian religion cannot be true because it makes such slow progress in the world, is to say more than the speaker probably meant to affirm.

It is to say that *honesty* cannot be good, or else it would be practised between man and man the world over; *purity* cannot be good, or at the mention of it all evil would be abhorred; temperance, candour, and good-will cannot be good, or they would instantly prevail wherever they have been made known. Evil hates goodness, hates light, hates God; and as truth cannot fight with carnal weapons, or

force itself upon the world by physical means, it can only "stand at the door and knock," and mourn the slowness which it cannot accelerate. It is God's will that the rock grow slowly, and that the forest hasten not its maturity; but it is surely not the will of the Lord that His children should grieve Him long, and provoke Him to wrath through many generations.

We have been speaking of the controversy respecting the Unseen and Invisible God. There is a distinct effort made in our day to turn the controversy out of historical channels, and to fasten it upon abstract speculation. As Christian teachers we must resist this effort, for we at all events believe that the discussion concerning essential Deity was started from a new centre when Jesus Christ came into the world. Still, when philosophers tell us that God is Unknowable, Unthinkable, Incognoscible, and Inscrutable, we are bound to reply that they have only put into uncouth language what the Bible had already told us in simple words. They say God is inscrutable; the Bible says, "Who can by searching find out God?" They say God is incognoscible; the Bible says, "No man can see God and live." They say God is unknowable; the Bible says, "No man hath seen God at any time, neither can see Him." Here is the modern philosophy, four thousand years old and more! But the point upon which I wish to insist is this: As distinctively Christian teachers, not mere Deists, Theists, or natural theologians, but as believers in the Christian revelation, specifically so called and known, we are bound to look, not at a speculative Deity, but at

the God made known to us by Jesus Christ. To this branch of the argument let us briefly turn.

Suppose a man should arise and make this claim on his own behalf, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father;" "I and my Father are one." The man would not be believed simply because he made the claim; perhaps, indeed, he would be stoned; perhaps he would be thought mad. If, however, we are at all interested in this speech —so novel, so startling—our first hope will be that from this man we may learn something about the Unknown God. We must listen further. How few men listen well, —how few listen with the soul! We must ask him questions. His character must be tried as by fire; his life must be watched with jealousy cruel as the grave; and every word he says must be stretched on the rack of a fearless criticism, for strait must be the gate and narrow the road to Godhood. No man must be allowed to vault the high barriers. Now it is only just to this man to say that this is the very test which he wishes to undergo. He does not thrust himself arbitrarily upon man; he stands at the door and knocks! Could the meanest servant do less? When we cannot grasp all the meaning of his unfamiliar words—so much background have they, and so vast a perspective—he says, If you cannot yet understand or receive the word, believe me for the work's sake; let my wonderful work done in your own home, or upon your own child, be as a telescope through which you may see the High and the Lofty One. Thus we are constrained to listen still; and as we listen, sometimes we are quieted by

a tender music; sometimes we take up stones to stone him, because he says that God is his Father, making himself equal with God; and sometimes, when we are weary, and he speaks of Rest, we are tempted to throw our arms around him, and cry upon his breast for very joy,—for it is rest we need, we are so tired and so weak.

But mark, how we are likely to be loyal, because so far the advantage has been on our side. A very subtle deceit may delude us. Up to this point we have heard new words, seen wonderful works, and received a promise of Rest, and therefore we are prepared to be loyal! But wait! The trial has yet to come. Now that we are healed and comforted with reviving rest, he says, "I must claim you, body and soul; he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; except a man deny himself and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple." So the religion to which Jesus Christ calls us is not a pleasant soporific, lulling us into dreamy repose, and filling the scented air with glittering fascinations; it is a cross, a yoke, a discipline, a service; it means continual sacrifice for the good of others; it sends us into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature; it enjoins lowliness, patience, meekness, humbleness of mind, longsuffering, gentleness, and charity,—and at that point a great controversy sets in; from that time forth many of His disciples walk no more with Him; some say, "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" and all men exclaim, "Who then can be saved?" You see, then, how the argument repeats itself. A small god, small controversy; small claims, small opposition; great claims, and mighty rebellion!

Why is it, then, that we do not wholly leave Him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us?" It is because He touches our life as no other power can touch it, and because our poor life requires to be so touched by reason of its many infirmities. Whether he be a sinner or not, one thing we know, and on that one thing we rest. We have known the pain of sin and the bitterness of sorrow; we have lost our firstborn and seen Death at his very worst; we have been driven into impassable paths, stripped, scourged, tormented; we have been hungry, cold, friendless; we have stolen away to the grave by night, and have had to grope for it in the dark, and then, when we have been blind with tears, and wild with grief not to be borne, *then* "never man spake like this man;" and if in our grateful enthusiasm we have in return called Him Lord and God, pardon us, for when you are in the same anguish you may commit the same crime.

Speaking from a controversial point of view, we have received this representative of God cautiously, and even with keen and hostile suspicion. And this advice we are prepared to give: Watch him, weigh his words, probe every deed that he does, sum up into one large exaggeration all the improbabilities arising out of his ancestry, birth, trade, obscurity; tell him that such garb of flesh is unbecoming God; mock him, that you may try his temper; smite him, that you may test his dignity; take him by surprise, that you may discover his resources; question him with hard and delicate questions, that you may entangle him in his speech; drive him out into the cold night, that you may prove his fortitude; call him mad, say he

has a devil, sell him for silver, crucify him, crucify him, and—THE GOD THAT ANSWERETH BY FIRE, LET HIM BE GOD!

You will understand me when I say that I thank God that no name given under heaven amongst men has occasioned, and is now occasioning, so much controversy as the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Alas! there is a controversy between our own hearts and Him, but it is not now of that sad controversy I speak. I glory in the fact that no name can excite the nations as they are excited by the name of Jesus. In this respect it is better to live in Christendom than in Kedar. Men do not know what to make of Christ. Their best books leave the secret unsolved. They sell Him, and afterwards go out and hang themselves; they deny Him, and then go out and weep bitterly; they destroy the temple of His body, but He builds it again in three days. You cannot get rid of Christ: you exclude Him from your schools by Act of Parliament, but He, passing through the midst of you, says, "Suffer me and the children to meet; let the flowers see the sun;" you find Him in statute-books, in philanthropic institutions, in literature; you find Him now just as His disciples found Him, in out-of-the-way places, doing out-of-the-way things;—"they marvelled that he spake with the WOMAN,"—the eternal marvel, the eternal hope! He is speaking with the woman still; speaking with her in India, in China, in islands far out upon the sea; presently He will take up her children in His arms and bless them, and be Himself as the child that is born unto every woman.

This leads me to say that how strong soever Christianity

may be in force and dignity of pure argument—and in that direction it has proved itself victorious on all fields—its mightiest force for good is in its vital and inexhaustible *sympathy*. Theology as a science no man will lightly underrate; but the controversy in which we are engaged is more than a battle of sciences; and I know of no word which so fully expresses the infinite advantage of Christianity in the encounter as the word sympathy. Christianity can, of course, assume what we are pleased to call scientific forms, but no scientific form can hold all her truth and pathos any more than a bush could hold the infinity of the living God,—a ray unloosed to light a man to his great destiny. A science that distinguishes one attribute of God from another, that attempts to show where one ends and another begins, that determines their relationship and interdependence, that arbitrates in supposed controversies between Justice and Mercy, that holds the light of critical explanation over mysteries which even Christ never attempted to illuminate,—a science that builds a house for God in some set form of words, and an habitation for the Eternal in prescribed formularies that can be duly enrolled in the High Court of Chancery, may, by the spell of genius and the wealth of learning, secure the attention and hold the confidence of educated men; but Christianity as a sympathetic religion, tender, hopeful, patient, with morning light for ever falling on its uplifted eyes, leaning with all its trust upon the Cross of the atoning Son of God, calling men from sin, ignorance, and death, is a figure the world will not willingly spare in its day of anguish and sore distress.

III.

It will be interesting to observe how God Himself meets the controversy which He deplores; for in doing so we may (1) learn a method of reply, and (2) see light arising in an unexpected quarter, in reference to the controversies of our own day. When God answers, His reply must be the best; and when He hopes, it must be upon grounds that are sufficient.

(1) Look at the Divine challenge: "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" This sublime challenge you cannot find in all the sayings of heathen gods. And this is the invincible defence of the Christian religion in all ages and in all lands,—you have Purity at the centre, you have Holiness on the throne! If this were the time or place, we could collect from Greek and Roman history, and from other pagan sources, an array of charges against the gods themselves, that would show the pertinence and the justice of this high challenge.

Dr. Cotton, Bishop of Calcutta, tells us, in one of his letters, of a youth whom he baptised, who gave as one of the reasons of his abandoning Hinduism, "the crimes of the gods"! "What iniquity have your fathers found in me? saith the Lord." The gods of Olympus considered themselves emancipated from the restraints of the moral law; they boasted their superior intellectual power, but cared not to conceal from men the tumult of their immorality. Amongst the Homeric gods you look in vain or courage, justice, prudence, temperance, or self-control.

"What iniquity have your fathers found in me? saith the Lord." The Greek gave his god Titanic intellect, but left him without a rag of character. The Greek made his god immortal, but it was an immortal bacchanalian or an immortal debauchee. "What iniquity hath your fathers found in me? saith the Lord." And if the gods of pagan Rome were not the outcome of "an unbridled and irreverent fancy," the religion which they were supposed to patronise was perhaps the purest selfishness the world has ever seen. Hence it has been truly said, "Ancient Rome produced many heroes, but no saint." The pagan Romans often took their gods into their own hands, and scourged them in sheer spite. When Augustus saw that his fleet was wrecked, he virtually deposed Neptune by solemnly degrading the statue of that negligent god. When the young and illustrious Germanicus died, the people stoned the altars of the gods, because the gods had not spared the life of one who might have been king. The pagans are everywhere ridiculed by the fathers for satirizing in the theatres the very gods they worshipped in the temples. Those of you who have read Augustine's immortal work, "The City of God," will remember with what fierce eloquence he scourges the gods of pagan Rome. How biting his tone, how keen his retorts, how broad his sarcasm! "Why," he sternly demands, "did the gods publish no laws which might have guided their devotees to a virtuous life?" And again, "Did ever the walls of any of their temples echo to any such warning voice? I myself," he continues, "when I was a young man, used sometimes to go to sacrilegious entertainments and

spectacles; I saw the priests raving in religious excitement, and before the couch of the mother of the gods there were sung productions so obscene and filthy for the ear that not even the mother of the foul-mouthed players themselves could have formed one of the audience." History, as you know, is full of such instances. Remembering these things, you may see the force of the inquiry, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" This, I repeat, is the invincible defence of the Christian religion to-day. If you make it an argument, and elaborate it as a philosophy, I see not what is to hinder you carrying the battle to victory as a purely intellectual contest. But there is something more, which must not be overlooked by the Christian teacher. God is not only the High, but the Holy One; and those who seek Him must seek Him in spirit and in truth. The watchword of Christianity is, "Be ye holy as your Father in heaven is holy." Seek "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord"—so runs the Christian commandment.

Observe how Jesus Christ repeats the very challenge we find in the text,—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John viii. 46). And, later on, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil" (John xxiii. 23). They had accused Him often, but had convicted Him never! I apply this doctrine with timidity. I almost fear to apply it, for who would wilfully slay himself, or bring judgment upon a thousand men? Yet the application is this: When the Church is holy, the Christian controversy is ended in universal and immortal triumph! "Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may

glorify your Father which is in heaven." When we can say, "What iniquity have ye found in us?" we may take down the war standard, for the fight has become victory. But if we bite and devour one another, if our good words be few and our bad words be many, if we live in clamour, in distrust, in bitterness,—what is it if with a strong logic we have a contradictory life? "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." I put this weapon into the hands of young Christian soldiers as one which has never been bent or broken in any war,—the weapon of God's holiness. When men puzzle you with high, bewildering arguments, say, *God is good.* When their words are long and hard, and they run your imperfect skill to earth in hot logical chase, say, *God is holy.* When they are violent, bitter, resolute in enmity, and inflamed with rage, say, *God is love.*

2. Look at THE DIVINE HOPE. "In the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us!" When the prodigal began to be in want and no man gave unto him, he said, "I will arise and go unto my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." After we have been hungered by unprofitable controversy, and after we have seen into the deep places of the earth yawning under our feet as graves from which there can be no resurrection, probably we may turn our eyes towards the hills where the Lord is, and desire Him to remember His former lovingkindness. This is my hope concerning the young

who leave the old paths. They are fond of change; long words have a charm for them; contradiction and dispute would seem to belong to the period of youth. I do not give them up because they have gone away from us for a season; they will come again, and we will be glad to see their worn faces, with disappointment written in every deep wrinkle, turned towards their Father's house. They do not yet know life; they think they do, but they are mistaken. The ploughshare has not been driven through their heart, nor has their soul felt the entering in of the iron. Be patient then, and hopeful, and you shall see the wonderfulness of the Lord's way.

I hear your complaining, and I have sympathy with your distress. "My son has turned from the old ways; once the child read the Bible with me, and many a sweet talk we have had about Jesus and God and heaven; we went to the house of God in company, and entered into His service with delight; but others got hold of him; the change was slow but sure; he brought home books that were, in my opinion, full of poison; and he went down in the tone of his filial love and trust, until now we never mention the subject of religion: my prayers are lost, my hope is blighted, my cup runneth over with sorrow."

Now wait a moment, that we may talk the matter over still further.

Is he married?

To a beautiful and gentle wife.

Has he children?

Three as lovely little girls as ever lived.

Are they all well?

Never had a day's sickness in their house.

Is your son prosperous in business?

Wonderfully so; it seems as if the world were under his feet.

And he has quite given up religion?

I fear so. I know he has no family prayer, and he boasts that he never looks into the Bible.

How old is he?

Something under thirty.

My friend, he will come again! I will tell you when. Some night he will come home later than his custom, without the usual sprightliness, pallid, gloomy, and silent; and little by little he will give his wife to understand that he has lost everything, and that he is a beggar; and a great groan will tell how true the story is. If a friend could then say to him in a whisper, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," he would recognise an old familiar voice. By-and-by, one of his lovely little girls will sicken, and for many days and nights she will lie helplessly in an upper room of the meaner house into which his poverty has driven him; and some dark night, when they are alone, she will lay her thin little hand upon him and say, "Father, can you help me, dear?" And then he will turn his blanched face away in mortal agony, if haply he may put the question to another Father, invisible, divine. Then if a friend could whisper to him, "Suffer little children to come unto me," he would recognise the old sweet words. And by-and-by the lovely child will die; before doing so she may clasp her little hands, and he will know what that clasping means, though it be done dumbly;

and as she lies there, a lily just plucked, beautiful, silent, pure, he will grope about for the Bible long disused, he will find it, and an angel will show him where to read—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; but the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." And in that hour the angel will say of your son, "Behold, he prayeth."

"IN THE TIME OF THEIR TROUBLE THEY WILL SAY, ARISE, AND SAVE US."

A Personal Review.

"*So was he seven years in building it.*"—1 KINGS vi. 38.

TO-DAY I complete a seven years' ministry in the City of London. You will agree with me that the time suggests and justifies a careful review of our purposes and labours during that period. No apology is needed for a brief allusion to personal matters; indeed, without such allusion there could be no such review as is proposed. After eleven years' ministry in Manchester, I came to the Poultry Chapel under the distinct pledge that it was to be sold, and a new church built with the price. That pledge has been kept to the letter, and though in carrying it out many a difficulty has arisen, yet those who have done the work are one in heart this day, our trust is without a flaw, and our praise to God is full and deep. When we sold the Poultry Chapel, we had something like £50,000 in hand, and the question was, Where shall we build? In the City, or in the suburbs? In a back street, or in a leading thoroughfare? We decided nothing hastily. Every step was anxiously considered. We could have built a beautiful meeting-house in the suburbs for £20,000, and endowed it with £30,000, and thus have made ourselves comfortable

for life. Instead of that, we determined to build in the City. We soon found that the Corporation of London did not give the City land away, and this fact took off much more than the half of the sum with which we had to deal. Then came the difficulty of treating a peculiar site. And altogether we found ourselves at last in debt to the extent of £6,000. The whole scheme is not yet completed. Something more is required, which I will presently explain. Taking everything into account—our present actual debt, and the work that yet remains to be done—we want £1,200. Towards this amount I shall, by means of outside friends—please to observe that, by means of friends who do not belong to this place, I shall contribute this day £500, leaving £700 to be contributed this morning. My hope is that the whole amount be given, and thus, at the end of seven years, we shall get rid of the burden of debt.

1. In looking back, and giving an opinion as to the wisdom of what has been done, I wish to use words which I have weighed well. Looked at in some aspects, our experiment was a hazardous one. Everybody who could get away was supposed to be leaving the City: City churches were being taken down, and in every way the City was being emptied, from a Church and Sunday point of view. Still, as the result of seven years' work, I wish to say that if I had to begin again, I should not only build in the City, but on the very spot which we now occupy. The City is *not* deserted on Sundays. Something like two thousand young business people in City warehouses remain in town over Sunday. Many of them attend places of worship, and lay themselves

out to do good in many ways; but others of them, on the authority of young men themselves, spend their Sundays in the most objectionable manner. The term is not too strong. I say that when young men lie in bed until noonday, smoking, singing foolish songs, playing at cards, and neglecting every usage of respectable society, they are spending their Sundays in an objectionable manner. Remove all places of Christian education and worship from the City, and you give these young men a shadow of excuse for their conduct; but keep a genuinely gospel ministry in their midst, encircle them with opportunities of mental and spiritual improvement, fill the very air with direct, sensible, and persuasive appeals, and you may possibly bring them to reflection, and to a better life. This is the ground of our appeal to Christian merchants. We say, do not forget the City in which you make your money: when you go to your beautiful country residences, remember those your servants and helpers whom you have left behind. We believe this appeal is wise and good, and we are glad and thankful to say that it has been recognised, and in some degree has been answered.

2. This church, occupying so prominent a position in a leading thoroughfare, is bound to give some explanation of itself. This is a Protestant church. I would not have said this so emphatically but for the incredible and ridiculous circumstance that it has been seriously asked whether all Nonconformists are not Roman Catholics. In the next place this is a Nonconformist church. It seeks to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the

things that are God's." It says to legislators, statesmen, and politicians, Attend to the protection of the country, give all the people, so far as is possible, security of life and property, arrange all questions of taxation and of international intercourse, put down crime, give industry and commerce every facility to consolidate and expand, but let religion alone, leave religious conviction to the individual intelligence and conscience, confine yourselves to things seen and measurable, and leave theology to make its own way and defend its own claims. As Nonconformists we heartily pray, "God save the Queen," "God guide our Parliament," "God bless our country."

As Protestant Nonconformists, we preach the inspiration and final authority of Holy Scripture; we declare the infinite sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to meet the whole difficulty of human sin; we believe that Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, "God with us;" that He gave Himself for our sins; that there is no salvation out of Christ; that we are justified by faith and not by works, and that works are only good in so far as they spring from faith and express the spirit of unutterable love. We believe in the simplicity of Christ. We have no ritual but of the simplest kind; we have no masonry known only to the initiated; cunning handling of things, priestly pomp, official mediation, and sacramental sacrifice, are, thank God, utterly unknown to the Protestant Nonconformist congregations of England. I preach the doctrine of human depravity, insisting by every form of argument known to me that man has neither the will nor the power to save himself: I preach Christ as the Only

and Infinitely Sufficient Saviour of the world, and God the Holy Ghost as the only Renewer and Sanctifier of the heart. Believing that in theological questions metaphysical genius finds at once its highest challenge and its keenest disappointments, I yet eschew all that is merely metaphysical, and confine myself in pulpit teaching to the setting forth of those broad and living truths which the humblest minds can accept, which our stricken and sorrowing daily life needs, the consolations which diminish and sanctify our sorrows, and the promises which spread their cheering light over the whole space of our life, and shed upon the grave itself the morning glory of resurrection and immortality.

Our attitude towards other Christian communions is not one of toleration, which is at best a doubtful term; it is one of honour, confidence, and admiration, wherever the living truths of the gospel of Christ are maintained and published. Regarding the Church of England as a spiritual institution, working for the evangelization of the people, and the godly and comfortable nurture of those who have believed unto the salvation of their souls, we heartily say, God bless her, and send down upon her bishops and clergy, and all who work under her guidance, all the grace and strength which their apostleship and ministry require.

3. I have said that if I had to build in London again, I would build on this spot. Let me tell you why. It is a sacred locality. "The ground on which thou standest is holy ground." Apart altogether from its general convenience, its three frontages, its command of north and

south approaches, its basement full of schoolrooms, class-rooms, and other offices, it gathers around itself a host of memorable and pathetic associations.

Charterhouse Square is within a few minutes' walk of the place wherein we are at this moment assembled. I wish you to accompany me in fancy to that well-known square on a dull day in December. There is a man dying there who has suffered more perhaps than any ten men have endured. The historian says that the most inhuman heart would be moved by the mere catalogue of his sufferings. Tell him that he has written much, and written well in the name and cause of Christ, and he will meekly answer, "I was but a pen in God's hands, and what praise is due to a pen?" When his sufferings increased to an intolerable point, so as almost to force from him a prayer for release, he would recover himself and say, "*When Thou wilt, what Thou wilt, and how Thou wilt.*" And to his sorrow-stricken friends he would say, "Do not think the worse of religion for what you see me suffer." Then would come visions of heaven, rents in the darkness through which celestial splendour glanced upon him in his prison. Then the old sharp pain, in the agony of which he would say, "I have pain; there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace, I have peace." That December night is very cold and cheerless, and the poor tenement is but dimly lighted, and in the chill and the gloom the good man said to his faithful servant, "Death, death!" Soon after, he turned to a friend to thank him for his visit, and said, "The Lord teach you to die;" and the cold night passed, and the colder morning dawned, and on the 8th December, 1691, there went up to

heaven the pure and noble soul of Richard Baxter, author of the "Saints' Everlasting Rest." "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." I want to put in this building a window to the memory of Richard Baxter, and to keep his honoured name before the young people of this congregation from one generation to another to the end of time. Will you help me?

This building is called the City Temple. The Church worshipping in this building has been identified with the City of London for two hundred and thirty-six years. The Church was founded by Dr. Thomas Goodwin, the most learned man of his day; Preacher to the Council of State, Member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, sometime President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. He died in the parish of Saint Bartholomew the Greater, and he is buried in Bunhill Fields. He died in his eightieth year. It was not dying. He said, "I could not have imagined I should have had such a measure of faith in this hour. My bow abides in strength. I am swallowed up in God." I want to erect a tablet to the memory of this learned and godly man, whose name connects us as a Church with some of the most eventful periods of English history. I want his memorial tablet to adorn our vestibule, that we may be reminded of our best traditions, and be stimulated to serve Goodwin's Lord with a still more glowing zeal. Will you help me? We owe much to such men. We are bound to preserve in honour their noble and illustrious names. Such names are inspirations.

Blot them out of English history, and you make English history poor indeed.

If you stand at the front door of this church and look towards the east, you will see a place well known as Snow Hill. In a room above a small shop there died a man whose very name is part of the English language. A rich man had differed with his son, and determined to disinherit him. The man of whom I speak came to London to plead the son's cause. "He had to ride through heavy rain. He came drenched to his lodgings on Snow Hill, was seized with a violent fever," and died in August 1688. Mr. Bragge, the then minister of this church, was with him in his dying hours, and saw him pass through the gate Beautiful. For it was the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" that died there; tinker, preacher, prisoner, writer—John Bunyan! I want a window to his memory in this church. The atheist would let him die; the scoffer would not care to prolong his memory; but there are Christian men who have carried the burden, fallen into the slough, passed through the Wicket Gate, fought with Apollyon, and seen the land afar off, who will keep his grave green, and write his name on the walls of the Lord's sanctuary. This is not sentiment—it is honour to whom honour is due, it is patriotism, it is gratitude to memories that give England a foremost place in the assembly of nations.

Looking from the rear of this building, you see the site of the old Fleet prison. In that dungeon lay many whose only crime was the enlightenment and tenderness of their religious feeling. I want to write upon our walls the

illustrious name of John Hooper. Speaking of his imprisonment in the Fleet, he says: "I had nothing appointed to for my bed but a little pad of straw, and a rotten covering; on one side of this prison is the sink and filth of the house, and on the other side the town ditch, so that the stench of the house hath infected me with sundry diseases. During which time I have been sick, and the doors, bars, hoops, and chains, been all closed and made fast upon me, I have moaned, called, and cried for help." He was hurried away to Gloucester, where he underwent the most cruel and atrocious martyrdom, even of those cruel times. When at the place of execution a box containing his pardon was laid before him, and offered to him if he would recant, "If you love my soul," said he, "away with it, away with it." Will you let a name like that die? Is the money ill-spent that is laid out in giving that name an enduring memorial? John Milton says, "There will one day be a resurrection of great names,"—let us do our part towards making that resurrection a fact.

From our front door you look towards a place never to be forgotten, the world-renowned market of Smithfield. We are so near that famous locality that the smoke of the torment of its martyrs must have hovered above the site on which this church is built. I want to put up in this building a memorial to Anne Askew. If you inquire who Anne Askew was, I will tell you. "She was a Lincolnshire lady, and greatly in favour with Katherine Parr, the last of the wives of Henry VIII." She was taken before Sir Martin Bowes, Lord Mayor of London, and being questioned concerning transubstantiation, his lordship in-

quired of his prisoner, "And what if a mouse eat sacramental bread after consecration? What shall become of the mouse?—what sayest thou, thou foolish woman? I say," continued his lordship, "that *that mouse is damned.*" "Alack, poor mouse!" was Anne's only remark. In course of time she was sent to the Tower, and put to the rack, for reading the Scriptures and studying the writings of Wycliffe and the later reformers. So terribly was she tortured upon the rack that the Lieutenant of the Tower interposed, but her tormentors did not cease "till her bones and joints were almost plucked asunder." On July 16th, 1545, she was carried to Smithfield in a chair, "because she could not go on her feet by reason of her great torment." There she was tied to the stake by a chain; and upon a scaffold near at hand sat the Lord Mayor of London, accompanied by the Chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk, and others of the King's council. Letters were offered to Anne Askew, containing the King's pardon; but she refused even to look at them, saying, "I have not come hither to deny my Lord and Master."

Women of England! will you let this sister's name perish? She was a woman, a sister, a child,—yes, truly a child, for she was but twenty-two when from Smithfield Market she ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire.

Readings in the Book of Psalms.

THE FIRST PSALM.

"*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*"

These are cases in which without a figure "ignorance is bliss." Observe that all the characters mentioned here may have their excellences and their attractions; for example, the ungodly may be rich, the sinners may be convivial, the scornful may be brilliant; yet, blessed is the man who has nothing to do with them! Their conversation may be rich, witty, sparkling; but, blessed is the man who never hears a word of it! Again and again the poison will be distilled through it. Under all that is fair, there festers the evil purpose. Blessed is the man who keeps his hands out of the fire; blessed is the man who keeps far away from the nest of the serpent; blessed is the man who knows not the language or the masonry of the wicked. Nor is his a merely negative blessedness, though it appears to be so. The man's state is not to be looked at merely as it *is*, but as it *might have been;* and so viewed, it is a state of positive and incalculable blessedness.

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

These words are not to be taken in a narrow sense. The picture is not that of a man sitting with an open Bible perpetually before him. The idea is that of a man who sees the law of the Lord in all nature, all history, all life, everywhere and always, and delights to trace its beneficent and almighty power. Reading of the letter of course there must be,—that is indispensable. But do not suppose that "the law of the Lord" is simply so much letterpress: it is a life, a presence, a government; it is a voice in the garden, the angel of a covenant, a fire blazing in the wayside bush, a hand upon the wall, a star in the east, a crucifixion, a spirit. There is a theology of *Providence* as distinctly as there is a theology of *Redemption*.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

A man's life should be rooted in God, in God's law, in God's service. It should not be as a plucked flower, but as a flower unplucked growing in the eternal stem. Where God is, there is no famine. Sever your life from God's law, and you cannot grow, you cannot be at rest; you will be the victim of circumstances, affrighted by surprises, and disquieted by many fears. The good man, the student and servant of God's law, is not only like a *tree*, he is like a tree planted by rivers of water; so long as the rivers run, his roots are nourished; he lives in the great scheme

and system of things; no vagrant is he, but a citizen, and a householder. His likeness unto a tree planted by the rivers of water is full of suggestion: a tree is permanent, is fruitful, is beautiful; its branches are for refreshment, and its shadow for rest; it answers the sun and rain; it waits for God, and puts forth its life at His bidding. *Prosper,*—in no mean or narrow sense, but really and ultimately. If you say that the good man does not always prosper, you may say the same thing about God Himself. The good man prospers as God prospers. God complains that His law is slighted, and His word disobeyed; yet He says that His law shall be set up in the earth, and that His word shall not return unto Him void. Some adversities are temporary; they may indeed be part of a process; as truly as *God* prospers will the *good man* prosper,—their purposes are identical. The circumstances which suggest that the good man's prosperity is uncertain, are like the hills and valleys which suggest that the earth cannot be a globe. They all fall under a higher law,—an infinite astronomy.

"*The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*"

Who can gather again the chaff which has been driven away? Where is it? Whose is it? Who will claim it? Who will buy it? Who will care for it? But there are appearances to the contrary. Some ungodly men seem to be well established. They have property. They have influence. "Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart can wish." These are appearances only. At a little distance the chaff might be mistaken for

wheat. The distinction between the godly and the ungodly must be *vital*. Such is the distinction between wheat and chaff; in wheat there are harvests for generations through all time, in chaff there is nothing but emptiness and rottenness.—Driven by the wind! Carried here and there without will or force of their own. To know whose they are, you must know where the wind is,—the wind of popularity, the wind of success, the wind of Divine visitation.

"*Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*"

These are the true and final tests of character. Put into the hands of a sower a handful of chaff and a handful of wheat, and can the former stand in his judgment? There is a judgment! There is a congregation of the righteous! At present, judgment is partial and uncertain, and at present society is mixed; but the time of judgment and separation is coming! Man soon comes to the end of his probation. Where are the ungodly of the last generation? What impression is produced by the recollection of their names,—a recollection of self-will, self-indulgence, self-promotion; not recollection of purity, wisdom, sympathy, or noble service.

"*For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*"

Mark the three characters: the godly, the ungodly, the Lord! The question is not whether the godly is apparently

stronger than the ungodly, but, what is the relation of the *Lord* to them both? The final award is not with man, but with God. The destiny of the righteous and the ungodly is as distinct as their characters. There is no blending of one into the other,—the one lives, the other perishes.

Application: Are you *blessed?* Do you distinguish between blessedness and transient *happiness?* What is your *fruit?* Is yours a *chaff* life? Whom God calls blessed can never be desolate, whom He calls cursed can never know true joy.

THE SECOND PSALM.

"1. Why do the heathen rage (bluster), and the people imagine (plot) a vain thing?

"2. The kings of the earth set themselves (in consultation), and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, *saying*,

"3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

"4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

"5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

"6. Yet have I set (invested) my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

"7. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

"8. Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

"9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

"10. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

"11. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

"12. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and, ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him (who hide in him)."

Why do the heathen rage? Because they *are* the heathen. The explanation of action is to be found in character. The heathen are without religious intelligence, sobriety, self-control; therefore they rage—literally, they bluster—and they foolishly suppose that noise is power.

Why do the people imagine a vain thing? Because they *are* the people; that is to say, they are a crowd, a multitude, a mob; they do not move from a social centre; they are the victims and the sport of any passion that may be uppermost at the moment.

But why do the *kings* and the *rulers* take counsel together against the Lord? Because they *are* kings and rulers; that is to say, they do not know that all governments are inferior and subordinate to spiritual and Divine dominion; they resent every suggestion of the sort; they have all the pettiness but none of the genius of ruler-

ship; they do not know that rulership ought to come up out of the spirit of obedience, and therefore that he who cannot obey cannot rule. Their notion of rulership is that of "breaking" and "casting away;" it is destructive, negative, ruthless. They do not say, let us *examine;* they say, let us *break;* not, let us *argue,* but, let us *cast away!* And this spirit comes out of a false notion of Divine government; they designate that government by two expressive terms—viz., "bands" and "cords:" they think that the Lord's government is tyranny and slavery; to them it is not the spiritual dominion of thought, rectitude, sympathy, culture, discipline, but a dominion of bands and cords,—that is, of merely physical and tyrannous strength.

4, 5. The heathen and the people, the kings and the rulers, are answered with contempt, they are laughed at and derided; and if this be not enough to change their spirit and their purpose, they will be spoken to in wrath, and vexed in sore displeasure. It is interesting and instructive to remark how creation first laughs at and derides men who oppose it, and how in the next place it avenges the insults which are offered to its laws. When Canute rebuked the waves the sea laughed at him, and the waves had him in derision: if he had set his foot upon the opening mouth of the volcano he would have been engulphed and lost. Let a man attempt to put down the wind, and the only possible answer is derision; let him attempt to defy the lightning, and he may perish under its stroke! There is but a short distance between the derisiveness of nature and its penal judgments. So, every attempt to

rival the *power* of God is contemned, every insult offered to His *holiness* is avenged.

6. There is but one King, and He is throned upon a hill that is, beyond all other characteristics, *holy*. What is the reason why masters should rule their households well? Because they have to remember that they themselves have a Master. So kings are to reign under the King, and *power* is to be established upon *holiness*. Any king who supposes himself to be final must of necessity become a tyrant, because final authority is inconsistent with limited wisdom and restricted power. Finality can only belong to completeness.

7-9. There is nothing in the economy of life and civilization that is haphazard. Before all things, and round about them as a glory and defence, is the Lord's "decree." Under all disorder is law. That law is first *beneficent*, and secondly *retributive;* it is beneficent because it contemplates the recovery and sanctification of the heathen, and the uttermost parts of the earth; it is retributive because if this offer of enclosure and honour is rejected, those who despise it shall be broken with a rod of iron, and dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. In the study of the world's constitution and movement, look first of all at the Lord's "decree," the Lord's idea and purpose. Settle it that the decree is good, merciful, redemptive, and then judge everything in the light of that fact. If you were judging of a national constitution you would not pronounce it bad because of its prisons; you would, on the contrary, pronounce it good for that very reason. You would know that there was a strong authority in that land, and that the authority was

good, because it imprisoned and rebuked the workers of evil. So, the rod of iron attests the holiness of God: and hell itself shows that virtue is honoured of heaven.

10-12. The threatening of Jehovah is neither an empty taunt nor a lawless passion. When He speaks of breaking the wicked with a rod of iron, and dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel, He is not to be compared with the kings and the rulers, who said, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." God's threatening has a *moral purpose* in view, which is to turn the kings to wisdom, and the judges to instruction: His threatening is, indeed, an aspect of His gospel. Having shown the wicked how terrible He can be—how easy it would be for Him to break them and dash them in pieces—He calls upon them to serve the Lord, to kiss the Son, and to enjoy the blessedness of them that put their trust in Him. He is not willing that any should perish. Judgment is His strange work. Christ will either have men as an inheritance, or He will have them as vessels which are fit only to be dashed in pieces. Who scorn His grace shall perish by His power!

Application.—Inasmuch as moral qualities are the same in every age, and inasmuch as God's kingdom is one and His dominion unchangeable, let us (1) see the folly of *all* rebellion against God; (2) notice specially the folly of *those who ought to know better* (kings and rulers and judges) setting themselves in array against heaven; (3) let us measure and determine everything by the Divine "*decree*." What God hath purposed must stand. Has He ever

spoken well of wickedness? Has He ever commended the wicked man? (4) Let us cherish the recollection that His threatenings are intended to prepare the way for His mercy. No man amongst you can say that he has not been *warned.*

THE THIRD PSALM.

(Written by David when he was fleeing from Absalom. It was completed immediately on crossing the Jordan.)

1. "*Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.*"

(*a*) When a man's enemies increase in number, the man should bethink himself, for surely they will not increase *without reason.* (*b*) On the other hand, the very fact that the enemies are all but countless, may be a tribute to *the man's greatness.* Something less than an army may destroy a bulrush or a mushroom. (*c*) It is possible for a man to create a host of *imaginary enemies,* and so to make himself miserable without a shadow of reason.

2. "*Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.*"

(*a*) In making statements of this kind a man should be exceedingly critical, lest he unconsciously seek to *tempt* God. This may, in reality, be less a complaint than a *challenge.* (*b*) At the same time there are undoubtedly many who suppose that affliction, or desolation, or trial, is

a manifest proof of Divine displeasure. This heathenish view of God is contradicted by the history of the Church and the personal consciousness of good men.

3-5. "*But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.*"

A vigorous realization of the spiritual above the material. Strange as it may appear, it is when material forces press against us with mightiest urgency that we see most of the nearness and sufficiency of the spiritual world. The twelve legions of angels seemed to be nearest Christ when His enemies were triumphing over Him. These verses show us how much a man may have when he actually has nothing in appearance; (*a*) he may have a sense of *security*,—"Thou art a shield for me;" (*b*) he may have a sense of *supremacy*,—"The lifter up of mine head;" (*c*) he may enjoy the quietness and refreshment of *sleep*,—"I laid me down and slept." He whose very desolateness is relieved by such mercies may well exclaim—

6. "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*"

This is really no great boast after all. Why should a man shut up in a castle of granite dare the tiny sparrows to invade his security? "He that is for us is more than all that can be against us." Yet on the side of our personal weakness this is truly no mean boast. When our children are against us (as Absalom was in this case), when we are

poor, desolate, hunted, and persecuted in every way, it is something to have such a view of God as shall become to us a shield, a buckler, a strong tower, and a pavilion ; then we do not compliment God, we felicitate ourselves upon the unmerited possession and enjoyment of His favour.

7. *Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone ; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*"

Unless this prayer be the expression of the soul in its highest and heavenliest moods, it is the most insidious of impiety. A man is not entitled to exaggerate his own cause when he is putting the case to God as between himself and his enemies. It is very natural for a man to think that whoever is against him is a fool, a knave, and a wicked person altogether. We never see *all* the aspects of a case. In the wars of nations, each side commends itself to God, assured that it is right, and that heaven will bring its banners to victory.

8. "*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord : thy blessing is upon thy people.*"

Here the Psalmist happily escapes from the narrow circle of his own affairs, and takes wing for the open firmament of heaven. The distinction as to Divine favour is not so clear between one man and another as the Psalmist seemed to imagine, for the rain cometh down upon the just and upon the unjust, and God is kind to the unthankful and the evil. But the doctrine of this verse is universally and for ever true. All true deliverance, or

salvation, is from the Lord; and the Divine blessing rests upon God's people in a sense which they alone can spiritually discern and appreciate. Whilst a man is confused by the details of his own cause, he is at the mercy of every change of circumstances; but when he takes his stand upon God's sovereignty and righteousness, he is resting upon a rock which cannot be shaken.

Application.—(1) Are *your* circumstances more trying than David's? (2) Will the *defence* which served for him be unequal to your protection?

THE FOURTH PSALM.

"1. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness (the God by whom I am righted): thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

"2. O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame? *how long* will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing?

"3. But know that the Lord hath set apart (hath signalised) him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him.

"4. Stand in awe, and sin not (equivalent to 'Be ye angry, and sin not'): commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.

"5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness (not such as

Absalom offered at Hebron, 2 Sam. xv. 12), and put your trust in the Lord.

"6. *There be* many that say, Who will show us *any* good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

"7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.

"8. I will (now that I have crossed the Jordan, and come safely to Mahanaim) both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

This is a fair-weather Psalm. David has been in distress, and now the clouds have been blown away, and the blue sky has returned; so he does what many seldom think of doing, he thanks God for deliverance and enlargement, and takes no credit to himself. In his high spiritual delight he rebukes those who love vanity, and those who go after lies or leasing. This is the inevitable operation of piety: it must rebuke evil; it cannot be silent in the presence of wrong. People who had seen his distress had questioned his religion, and in so doing had sought to turn his glory into shame, and had exclaimed that vanity was better than prayer, and that leasing was better than sacrifice. They pointed to facts in proof of their irreligious doctrine; they said, "Look at *David;* he prays and faints, he calls out for God, and God lets him die among the stones of the wilderness; let us then pursue vanity, and let us take refuge in lies."

Now David's time has come, and the facts are all on his side. He falls back upon experience, he becomes his own

argument, and his answer is so full, so wise, so firm, that it may be used as a defence by all who have proved the goodness and helpfulness of God in their distress. Let us put David's answer into modern words :—

1. You have mockingly said, "Look at David in his distress;" now that very captivity has been turned by the Most High, I say, "*Look at David in his enlargement and thankfulness.*" My turn has come. You must not look at a man's distress alone, and build an argument upon his sorrow; you must take into view the whole compass of his life. Will you say that the earth is a failure because of one bad harvest? It is important rigidly to apply this inquiry, because of the tendency of the human mind to think more of trials than of mercies, and to magnify the night above the day.

2. David continues: You have been judging by unusual circumstances and special providences of trial, but you should rest on great principles, and especially on the principle that *the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* Wholly so; he is as much the Lord's when in sorrow as in joy, in the wilderness as in Salem: you must not regard sorrow as a brand or a stain; it is *religious;* it is part of the great school-scheme by which God trains, purifies, and strengthens men.

3. If you believe this, you will "stand in awe and sin not;" that is, you will pray even in the storm, and you will bow down in homage when the Lord passeth by in judgment; you will go into the blighted wheatfield and say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes;" and desolation shall teach you the power of the

Most High. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still,"—that is, examine yourself; see how far the explanation of outward disasters is in your own mora condition; reflect, and do not talk; think, and be quiet; if you set up words against the Most High, you will vex your own soul and grieve the spirit. Commune—talk to yourself—reflect; but do not speak aloud, or you will become vulgar and profane.

4. You ask men, David continues, what you are to do in loss and pain and sorrow. I will tell you: "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord;" continue in the way of duty; go to the sanctuary even when you have to grope for the sacred door in darkness; seek the altar, and say, concerning God, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Your temptation will be to omit the sacrifices and to divide your trust; resist the devil, hold fast unto the end, and you shall be lifted high above the tumult of the crowd. People will say to you, Who will show us any good? Let your prayer be unto the Lord. The question is shallow and impertinent; it is limited to one set of circumstances; be not moved by it, but let your prayer still and for ever ascend unto God. Sometimes you will have no answer left but prayer. *Facts* will be against you—*logic* will give you no help; but if amidst all opposition and difficulty you are still found *praying*, you will confound and abash the unbeliever and the mocker.

5. In the next place David says something which cannot be understood by the mere letter; it can be understood only by those who have passed through the same experi-

ence. He says: Thou hast put gladness in mine heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. The idea is, that in loss and poverty, and apparent desolation, there may actually be more gladness, more real and lasting spiritual delight, than in times of prosperity. The idea goes further than this, and in another direction. The good man, the man whose trust is in the living God, has more gladness in his poverty than the worldly, unbelieving, mocking man has in all his corn and wine. There is a sufficiency that brings no content, and there is a poverty that cannot dry the springs of the soul's gladness. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Thus David retires from the controversy to lie down and sleep, though his enemies be many and his foes be men of might. He finds safety only in the Lord. Yea, when he appears to have no home and no rest, he feels that he is encircled by the everlasting arms. There is room in the tower of God for thee, my soul! Run away from all controversy, and make thyself quiet in God!

THE FIFTH PSALM.

"1. Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation (or moaning).

"2. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

"3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord;

in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

"4. For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

"5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

"6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

'7. But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

"8. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

"9. For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

"10. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

"11. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

"12. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

This Psalm is a direct address to the Almighty, and as such I propose now to consider it. I am not aware that any special instructions as to exact form were ever given to man in view of his approaching God in personal prayer. Reverence was enjoined, but no set form of

words was given; every heart was left to find words for itself; whatever past expressed its sorrow and its need, if spoken in truth, was acceptable to God. Now taking this as an example of personal waiting upon God—separating it from all merely local circumstances—what may we learn of Personal Worship?

(1.) Mark the *directness* of the speech. No priest stands between the worshipper and his Lord. Every man must state his own case. We pray *for* one another, but not *instead* of one another. (2.) Mark the *earnestness* of the speech. There is not one formal sentence from end to end. The man *means* what he says. There is no merely literary composition in his address; it was the heart's passion for the time being. (3.) Mark the *intelligence* of the speech. The Psalmist shows this (*a*) by *his conception of the character of God* (verses 4-6); God is righteous, severe, ineffable in holiness, terrible in judgment; (*b*) by *his view of the character and deserts of the wicked;* wickedness is something more to him than an error of judgment, or an excusable eccentricity, or a mere vapour which hardly shuts out the best hopes of life.

If this is the kind of prayer which the Lord will hear, then let us gladly learn—1. That *one* man will be heard; 2. That every man will be heard in his *own way;* 3. That no man who *loves wickedness* will be heard; and 4. That those who *are* heard and answered should be enthusiastic in their joy (ver. 11).

Regarding this as an acceptable prayer, we may correct some modern notions of worship; for example—(*a*) that we may not tell God what He *already knows;* (*b*) that we

may not make a *speech* to God; (*c*) that in prayer we should be continually *asking* for something.

Our worship should distinctly express our *personality* of sin, trouble, and necessity; then it will always be new, vigorous, and profitable.

THE SIXTH PSALM.

"1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

"2. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I *am* weak (withering): O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

"3. My soul is also sore vexed (is in extreme terror and dismay): but thou, O Lord, how long?

"4. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

"5. For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

"6. I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

"7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

"8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

"9. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.

"10. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

According to the *Speaker's Commentary*, "This is the first of the Penitential Psalms. It was composed in a season of extreme depression, probably when David was dangerously sick, and receiving accounts which made him anticipate an open outbreak of rebellion." The whole Psalm has about it the air of a sick-bed: the Psalmist says his bones are vexed, that he lies awake all night, and that his eye is consumed because of grief; he speaks, too, of death and of the grave. During his sickness David was unable to discharge the duties of the kingly office; this gave Absalom considerable advantage in exciting a revolt; so we have before our fancy a double picture of distress—David shut up in his sick-chamber, and Absalom doing his utmost to set the kingdom against his father. Perhaps we have been in the habit of thinking that the Psalms were written at the window of a beautiful library, flowers growing luxuriantly on the sunny walls, and the green lawn stretching far away, brightened here and there by birds of rare plumage; we have looked upon them, it may be, as the pious recreations of a morning hour,—entries in a spiritual diary, relating only to the sentimental and never to the practical side of life. The exact contrary is the case. Some of these psalms are battles. Many of them came out of heart-ache, and bitterness, and mortal disappointment. They are pages of autobiography. They are channels worn by the urgent streams of life. Never think of them as mere literary recreations, or as the effusions of a music-composer; they are pangs of the heart, they are letters addressed to God, they are the san[illegible] despair. If

it is worth while to explore the head of a river, it is of infinitely greater consequence to find out the spring and source of the streams which make glad the city of God.

We may get the meaning and help of the Psalm by asking, *How did David conduct himself in the time of sickness and trouble?*

1. First of all, he made his sorrow a question between himself and God. He did not regard it in its earthward aspect; there was something in it more than mere bodily pain, and something more than mere political disaffection. Set it down as a stern fact that there is a *moral* secret under the whole figure and movement of human life. Wherever you find *disorder* you find *sin.*

2. Proceeding from this point, David seeks to make things right between himself and God. It is no use to trump up a peace with Absalom. It is a waste of time to be arranging things that are secondary, until things that are primary are established upon a footing righteous and secure. My son Absalom has set himself against me; I might excite public pity on the ground of filial ingratitude; but is there not a cause in myself? Have I not done wrong, and become infamous in wickedness before the Lord? Is not God employing Absalom as a scourge to punish me for my own grievous rebellion against Himself? Such questions bring the soul into a right temper, and deliver it from the fretfulness of narrow views. It is wasted labour to decorate the walls when the foundations are giving way. In all trouble go first in self-reproach to God, and get at the *causes* of things.

3. In the third place, David feels that if the Lord's hand be removed he can bear all other troubles. Sin is the disease; discomforts, revolts, losses, are the mere symptoms; remove the disease, and the symptoms will disappear. (*a*) The pain of trouble is in the feeling that it is *deserved;* (*b*) take away the righteousness of the suffering, and then suffering is as an open door into our life, through which the angels come.

4. David approaches God in utter self-renunciation. There is no word of *self-defence* as before God. This is needful in all prayer that is meant to prevail. This state of mind does away with the whole machinery of argument, witnesses, criticism, and cross-examination. It resolves the question into one of *mercy.*

5. David prays the more earnestly because his afflictions have brought him within sight of the grave and the world unseen. He would not enter the valley without a sense of forgiveness. Who would? We *must* enter that dark valley,—we enter it either forgiven or unpardoned.

Now the light returns. David knows that his prayer is answered. The next work is easy. It is merely a question of time. Be right, be right with God, and your foes cannot touch you.

Are we right with God?

Progress of Manhood.

"*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*"—1 JOHN iii. 2.

PAUL says that if we have hope in this life only, we are of all men most miserable. In some respects that is perhaps too remote and speculative a truth for us to lay hold upon in its entirety. We must find, not in dreams only, but in facts, a ladder, the foot of which shall be upon the earth, up which we may climb, little by little, until we see greater spaces and brighter lights. I think we have in our own daily life this very truth plainly and happily set forth. This, indeed, is the very genius of our life. I hope to be able to show that there is enough of progress and development in our present existence to justify the belief that man, living in God and loving Him, shall pass on to capacities, services, and enjoyments, of which he can have now only the most imperfect conception. If we can establish the case within well-known limits, we shall be entitled to view the solemn future in the spirit of holy prophecy and hope. Look at the little child in his mother's arms: its eyes beautiful, but vacant, or just sharpening into attention and wonder; its hands a cluster of dimples; its head at all points of the compass in five minutes. Now look at that man who, with eye of fire and voice of thunde

binds an army together, and rules the will of a hundred thousand men with a word: the little, comely, helpless infant has grown into that mighty soldier, whose look is equal to a hundred swords, whose voice is equal to a cannonade. Who could have predicted such a man from such a child? Say, then, to every child, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be;" we must wait; we must live and work in the spirit of hope; this child, or that, may move the world to God and heaven!

Look at the child beginning his letters and forming words of one syllable. See him hesitating between C and G, not exactly knowing which is which, and being utterly confounded because he is not sure whether the word *to* should have two o's or one! Now look at the student shut up in the museum deciphering and arranging the most learned and difficult writings in all literature, vindicating his criticism in the face of an enlightened continent. The two are one. The little puzzled learner has grown into the accomplished and authoritative scholar. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!" If we follow on to know the Lord and do His will, our strength shall be equal to our day, and we shall be to ourselves a continual surprise, and to the dignity of life a constant witness, and a memorial not to be gainsaid.

Here is something which a child might hold in his hand, and it is not half an ounce in weight; no man would give a farthing for it. Yonder is a great tree, broad, high, spreading far, and lodging many a bird in its hospitable branches. The two are one. What you saw first was an acorn; what you saw last was an oak. S

may all other acorns say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!" we may yet grow into forests out of which shall be built the navies of the world.

Fancy a child born under the most corrupting and discouraging circumstances; parents immoral; poverty, desolation, discomfort of every kind, the characteristics of the house. No reverence, no chivalry, no pretence even of religious form; to be born under such circumstances is surely to be doomed to continual depravity, wickedness, and despair. Yet even there the Spirit of the Lord may mightily operate, and out of that pestilent chaos may order come, and music, and beautiful utilities. The dark mind may be penetrated, the leper may be cleansed, the valley may be exalted, and the crooked be made straight, and the prey be delivered from the terrible. This has been done; it is being done now; it is the daily Christian miracle; it constrains us by glad compulsion to exclaim, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

It is the joy of the Christian missionary to be able to point to villages once the scene of cannibalism, and of wickedness of every name, where there was no conscience, no law, no mercy, no honour, and to show you houses of Christian prayer, and to point out men who were cannibals singing Christian psalms and crying like children under the pathos of Christian appeals. What wonder, then, if within view of transformations so vital and astounding, we exclaim with thankful and hopeful surprise, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"?

In the occasional displays of power on the part of gifted individuals, we see some of the supreme possibilities of

human exaltation. In the great singer whose tones hold in blissful captivity the thronging multitude, hear the finest expression of your own hoarse, rude voice; for it is your voice; it is human, and in all things human you have rights and privileges; it is yourself refined and elevated—yourself redeemed and glorified. A few are trustees for the many. When Aristotle argues and Tully pleads, when Raphael paints and Milton sings, it is you, O poorest man, of uncelebrated or dishonoured name, it is *you*, realizing your immortality, accepting your Divine sonship, holding higher than any "banner proud" right up in the eye of the sun the charter of your celestial descent and infinite redemption.

I have heard the rocks talk thus. When they have seen parts of themselves taken away, and cunningly carved into poetry; when they have seen themselves built into majestic walls and lofty pillars, curved into arches and rounded into swelling domes, they have said, See what can be made of us! It doth not yet appear what we shall be! The hand of art can find an angel's face in the unshapen marble, and the eye of genius can see in the yet unblasted rocks minsters and abbeys that might make an atheist pray.

So the text has wide reaches and meanings. It points to new heavens and a new earth, to new humanities and new services, to death destroyed and the grave overthrown, to life upon life without sin or weariness, to day without night, to joy without satiety, and to knowledge without presumption. It is an upward way, a shining path, a flowery road; no lion shall be there, nor shall any

ravenous beast go up thereon, it shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The practical expression of so inspiring a faith is obvious. If you have this hope in you, you will set a high value on human life. You do not know what that boy of yours may yet be. You are bound to take the highest and brightest view, and to work in that direction. Regard him in his merely animal capacity, and your work will be hardly worth doing; but think of him as in germ a man, a citizen, a thinker, a Christian, a philosopher, a teacher, a leader, and your best sympathies, not your merely parental sensibilities, but your heart's truest concern, and your life's best labour, and your most earnest prayer, will converge upon every day of his existence. And under the inspiration of this hope your own troubles will come to have a new purpose and a blessed effect. The darkness of the present will be gilded by many a keen ray darted from the happy days that are yet to be, and that which is rugged and difficult now will be smoothed by your joyous forecast of an endless life. But if the future is to be blessed, the present must be well employed. In a deep sense, the present is the future. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." To-day is the seed which to-morrow you will have to cut down with the sickle!

Last night I saw a faint yellow light struggling with feeble timidity against some half-angry clouds; they gathered against the light, as if determined to shut it out; and the pale moon seemed too languid for resistance: but the breeze came to her help; the thickening clouds were

broken, and the moon seemed to take heart; brighter and brighter were her mild beams, until at last she stood up in the southern sky, the clouds all gone, like an angel watching from afar the flowers which the sun had just forsaken. So shall it be with our cloudy life, if we be God's children. The clouds are not permanent. They are but elevated shadows. The true light will pierce them, melt them, scatter them, and we shall stand out distinct as stars, higher than ever cloud ascended, renewed in lustre by the infinite glory of God.

Faith.

"*Can faith save him?*"—JAMES ii. 14.

THIS is a question which, in various forms, has puzzled a good many people. It seems to have puzzled the Apostle James. Paul says that Rahab was justified by faith, and James says that she was justified by works. Paul says: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." James says: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" James will not have faith alone, nor works alone; he will have faith made perfect by works.

There is a popular notion of faith, and there is a true notion of faith. The popular notion of faith is, that what a man does not deny, he believes; that he believes whatever he is not prepared to contradict; and that if he will maintain a doctrine in argument, he thereby proves that he believes it. Now this may not be faith in the true sense at all. It may be a step in the right direction; it may be something very valuable. An *intellectual* conquest may be represented by such acknowledgments and controversies. It may be with such a man as it is with a grate well filled with fuel to which the match has not been applied. It is,

so to speak, the material of faith; but it is not faith itself, any more than fuel is fire.

The true notion of faith is, conviction in action, principles operating in the life, sentiments embodied in conduct. Faith is more than intellectual assent; faith is an act of the heart,—"with the HEART man believeth unto righteousness." A man may know the right and yet do the wrong; so a man may have a good creed and a bad life; in which case we may well say, Can faith save him?

Then, again, the action of faith may be divided into metaphysical and practical. A man may contend with great intellectual subtlety and vigour for a certain theory of the existence of the Divine Being, and may all the while be living a most immoral life. So, he may stringently contend for a certain view of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and may condemn everybody as heterodox who does not accept it, and yet all the while he may be robbing his employer or slandering his neighbour. Can faith save him? Can intellectual orthodoxy save him? What does it amount to that a man has a clear knowledge of the theory of banking when he is convicted of forging a cheque? Can faith save him? Can knowledge of banking be accepted as an apology for forgery? By his very knowledge he is condemned. By his very faith he is damned.

Faith is practically nothing so long as it is merely in the head. Head faith can save no man. This is exactly so in daily life. There is no witchery or mystery in this doctrine at all. Faith cannot save you in commerce, any more than it can save you in religion. Faith cannot save the body,

any more than it can save the soul. So let us save Christianity from the supposed mistake of setting up a fanciful scheme of salvation; let us be simply just to the Son of God, by showing that he requires only the very same common-sense conditions of salvation that are required by ourselves in the common relations of our daily life.

A man believes that if he puts his money into certain funds he will get back good interest with the most assured security. Yet at the end of the year he gets literally nothing. How was that? Because, though he believed it, he did not put any money into the funds. Can faith pay him? A man thoroughly believes that if he takes a certain mixture, prescribed for him by good medical authority, he will get better, he will be recovered from his disease; but he gets no better; he gets worse; because, though he believed in the mixture, he did not take it. Can faith save him? A man wants to go to New York; he believes that ship is going; he is quite sure that ship will be there in less than a fortnight; yet he himself will not be there! How is that? He had faith. He had not the shadow of a doubt. Yet there he is, in England! Can faith take him to New York? Can faith save him?

Yet this is the very thing which people want to do with religion! They get a certain set of notions into their heads; they call those notions orthodox, and other notions they call heterodox, and they expect that those notions will save them! It is lunacy. It is an insult to common sense. It is wickedness! The question is not whether those notions are in our head, but, what effect have they upon

our life? Do they find their way from the head to the heart, from the heart to the hand? Fine geographical knowledge will never make a traveller. An exact knowledge of the chemical properties of water will never make a swimmer. You must bring your faith to a practical application. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

If I really and truly, with understanding and heart, receive the truths of the Christian religion, is there anything in them, as such, likely to move my life in a practical direction? Are they too fine for earth? Are they too subtle and speculative for time? As a mere matter of fact, the truths of Christianity are infinitely *practical*. They touch life at every point. In the morning, they are a loud call to duty; in the evening, they are a solemn judgment upon the day: when we go to business, they say, "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you;" when we feast, they say, "Send a portion to the poor;" and lest we should think there is one hour omitted from their severe but righteous rule, they say, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Here, a peculiar danger discovers itself. The man who wishes to avoid all that is most spiritual and holy in the Christian religion, inquires whether he cannot do all these

duties as a mere moralist, without being what is distinctively known as a Christian, a believer, a saint. He says he loves justice and mercy, benevolence and sympathy, and asks whether he cannot exercise or display them apart from what is called "saving faith in Christ." He says the Greeks had excellent maxims, and the Romans had admirable rules of conduct, and yet they knew nothing of Christ; why may not he be as they were?

Let us consider that question. There is a conduct that is philosophical, and there is a conduct that is spiritual; that is to say, there is a conduct that is based on logic, on the so-called fitness of things, on self-protection, on social harmony, on the music of individual and public relations; and there is a conduct based upon a spiritual conception of sin, upon a realization of Divine oversight and Divine judgment, upon a sense of self-helplessness and the conscious need of spiritual succour; and it is undoubtedly open to us to consider the respective merits of each theory of life. I accept the spiritual, because I believe it to be vital and fundamental; it is not a clever theory, it is a living reality; it is not a glittering and self-pleasing speculation, it is a law, a judgment, an eternal quantity. Give me a morality devised by human philosophy, and you give me a morality that may be changed by human philosophy. It may be very beautiful, but so may be an artificial flower; it may have all the appearance of a reality, but so may a mirage; it may be noble, useful, beneficent, in its immediate relations and uses, but if it spring not from the right source, no sooner will the sun be risen with any heat than it will be dried up, and nothing will remain but the scorched

channel in which it flowed for a brief moment. I must have a moral standard which I did not set up, and which I cannot pull down; a moral law which will harmonise with my nature, and yet for ever be above it; a law that will judge me; a law acting through all time, applying in all lands, over-riding all circumstances and accidents; far above me as the sun, round about me as the light; not a guess on the part of man, but a distinct and solemn and final revelation from God. This I have in Christ Jesus; and if I accept it by a living faith, it will come out in a holy, tender, wise, and useful life, and thus I shall be saved by faith.

Beware lest your question about pagan morality be a mere excuse for escaping spiritual discipline and obligation. Jesus Christ recognised heathen virtue. He said it was good as far as it went. He recognised the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and called upon us to exceed it. He pointed out all the excellences of the ancients, and demanded that where they were respectable, we should be holy; where they loved friends, we were to love enemies; where they saluted those who saluted them, we were to be kind to the unthankful and the evil.

Now let me subject you to a practical test in this matter. You have spoken well of heathen maxims and pagan excellences, and have asked whether they will not do in place of Christianity. Let us see. We will let your heart speak. You are about to die, and you must leave that five-years'-old little girl of yours in the care of some one. There is Aristides the Just; there is Solon the Wise; there is Lycurgus the Disciplinarian; there is Seneca the Moralist;

—and there is Jesus Christ. Any of them will take her. Now, decide!

The application of these reflections is very solemn. If Christians had lived up to their faith, the infidel never could have mocked their Lord and Master!

Christian Life and Growth.

"*I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*"—PSALM lxvi. 16.

WE will now look at certain passages of Scripture bearing on practical Christian life. Let me entreat you to test everything by the holy Word. If I say anything that is in the least degree doubtful, go at once to the Bible, and if you can find a clear statement upon the subject there, accept that at once, whoever may be discredited or superseded. What you and I want to find out is the full meaning of God's word,—and that we must have at all costs and hazards. As we have just been talking of what a Christian is *not*, it may be well to follow that subject up by looking at a very remarkable set of negatives given by St. Paul in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians. I will pick out some of those *nots* for you, and comment upon them briefly. For example—

"*Walk not as other Gentiles walk.*"—There is to be a marked difference between those who know Christ and those who do not know Him. And yet, though this is so apparently simple and plain, it is a point of supreme delicacy: clearly so, seeing that the human mind delights in ostentation, in the display of virtues as much as in the display of jewels, and in provoking comparisons favourable

to the man making them. In proof of this, look at the case of the Pharisee and the publican; all the things which he claimed to be set down to his credit were good in themselves, but his way of claiming them and glorying in them seemed to take away from them all dignity and value. There is a great temptation to look at other people and to say, "Well, I may not be perfect, but I could not do *that* at any rate!" This is the very spirit of the Pharisee! It is as tares among the wheat of good speech, and truly one may say, "An enemy hath done this." Have you not felt this temptation? Has not a wave of spurious gladness passed through your vain heart as you have marked the inferiority of another man? So, comparing ourselves amongst ourselves we become fools! The difference between the good man and the bad man is a difference of *spirit;* they eat and drink at the same table it may be, yet they are worlds away from one another; they are in the same business, yet hardly in the same universe; they use the very same words, yet the one is in meaning as high above the other as the heaven is high above the earth. You are not to say, "Look at me;" yet there is to be something about you so pure, so noble, so true, as to constrain men to regard you as the very standard by which social life is to be accurately measured. Now comes the sharp question, *Is* your character penetrated by this heavenly quality? Such a question will turn every day into a day of judgment, and will take out of us that black thread of self-content and self-worship which binds us as with cables of iron to the will of the devil.

"*Put off concerning the former conversation the old man.*" —Put off your dead self; throw away the winter husk and sheath, and put on the spring loveliness. You remember the case of the leper; he dipped himself in Jordan seven times, and his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child. It is just so with men who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. Their old enjoyments are now memories of offence and distress. They recall their old habitudes with shuddering and deprecation, and they are no longer known in the haunts where they once ruled. It is remarkable that they are an offence to their former companions, so much so that their entrance amongst them would be as the coming of a cold shadow over scenes of supposed brightness and gaiety. When we are living in Christ we have literally become new creatures, so much so that we have lost our original identity. Hence you will hear about yourself such words as "How changed!" "Not at all like the same man," "Whatever has come over him?" Happy man who, by reason of Christian spirit and action, elicits such remark! The old decrepid, corrupt, world-worshipping man has been cast off, and a new man—blooming in immortal youth, beautiful with more than earthly loveliness, radiant with spiritual lustre—has taken his place. There can, then, be no mistake or doubt as to the reality of the change. Can your thoughts become at all confused as to whether it was ugliness you saw or beauty, winter bleak and bare, or summer genial and crowned with flowers? So marked is to be the Divine life, so vitally different from all that ever went before it. Do you know whether it was a statue or a child that you saw in the

room? Was it a ravenous beast or a loving and welcoming friend that you met in the open road? It is this same sharpness of contrast which marks our old self and our new self; and the answer must be as precise as the question is distinct.

"*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.*"—This you may regard as an unnecessary caution or exhortation, for you would suppose that the very first thing a Christian would cease to do would be to tell lies. So it is, in the common acceptation of the term. But need I remind you that there is hardly anything so difficult as to be truthful through and through in all our speech and conduct? To neither *tell* a lie nor *act* a lie, to speak and to act the simple, pure, absolute truth,—who is sufficient for these things? Not to laugh falsely, smile falsely, cry falsely; not to leave a false impression, or convey a doubtful meaning, or interpose a misleading emphasis,—who is sufficient for these things? Falsehood is something infinitely subtler than can be expressed in the vulgarity of mere lies. We may even speak the truth with a false spirit! We may distort the truth, suppress the truth, discolour the truth, and yet all the while escape the common charge of lying. We may be false in shaking hands, in giving applause, in uttering censure, in going to church, in singing psalms, in offering prayer! You will see, then, and will see more and more if you search into this matter, that the exhortation to put away lying is neither superficial nor unnecessary. What a vast abyss of falsehood is found in what is called "business"! How men

say one thing and mean another, how many *final* offers they make in the same bargain, how they undervalue and exaggerate, how they buy in one language and sell in another;—why, virtue is thrown down in the streets, and falsehood fills the broad highway with her deadly shadow, and no man's heart breaks because of dishonoured truth. It is quite possible for a man to say, "I would scorn to tell a lie," and to be actually telling a lie in making the solemn statement! Oh how infinitely delicate is truth! How exquisite and sensitive the bloom on her fair cheek! How thin the veil that saves her life from the sword of the enemy!

"*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.*"—All these, you observe, are negative instructions. See, then, how much there is that is *not* to be done by the renewed man. There is an anger that is murder; there is an anger that is righteous; but even the holiest anger may come very near being sinful wrath. Beware! Your anger may be noble at the beginning, and mean at the end! If you brood over it, and nurse it, and turn it to purposes of revenge, you will give place to the devil, and he will bring you to ruin. Are we thankworthy when we are agreeable in the absence of provocation? Is it a great thing to be amiable when things are going exactly as we wanted them to go? On the other hand, as I have told you already, there is an amiability which is simple feebleness of character, and there is a good temper which comes simply of sweet blood and good digestion. To know the proper tempera-

ture of anger, to know just where to stop in the utterance of malediction, to be the mouthpiece of holy law rather than the medium of personal spite,—surely this knowledge cometh forth from the Lord of hosts! Set a watch on my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, O Lord, lest by hot and vain words I bring Thy holy Name into dishonour!

"*Let him that stole, steal no more.*"—Surely this is as unnecessary an exhortation as to put away lying! Who that mentions the name of Jesus, even with ordinary respect, could think of putting out his hands to steal? But the exhortation *is* necessary! We err if we think that stealing is the act of the hand alone. It is just as difficult to be honest as to be truthful. We may steal without touching anything that commonly comes under the head of property. We may steal time! We may steal reputation? We may steal self-indulgence! The question is not one of mere accident; it is a question of having the *spirit of honesty* dwelling and ruling in our inmost heart. The spirit of dishonesty is a spirit of falsehood. No liar can be an honest man. You may have heard men say, "I may not always tell the exact truth, but nobody ever knew me to commit an act of dishonesty." Now, not to tell the truth *is* to commit theft! You steal confidence, you steal honour, you steal what coarse hands can never touch, and your whole life is thus turned into a theft.

The Apostle adds other negative directions, such as, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," and, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour,

and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." You might think that he was giving lessons in the very elements of morality; so he is; yet you will find that there is one remarkable peculiarity about all the moral lessons which are taught in the New Testament, which is that New Testament morality can only spring from New Testament faith, and lead onward towards New Testament holiness. It is no external decoration. In so far as it is external it is as a wedding garment adorning and accrediting the Lord's welcome guest.

It would, indeed, seem to be so from one injunction, which throws a solemn grandeur over all the rest. Turn to the passage, if you please, and you will see what I mean. The Apostle has been telling men not to lie, not to steal, not to be wickedly angry, not to speak corruptly,—common decencies, you may say, or ordinary moralities; but he suddenly lifts them up from that low position, and makes them glow with religious ardour by the injunction, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God"! So, then, this stealing is not vulgar theft, and this lying is not vulgar falsehood; it is a call to truthfulness and honesty meant to penetrate the inmost heart, and to cleanse as with fire the most secret recesses of the soul.

Christian Life and Growth (*continued*).

"*I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*"—PSALM lxvi. 16.

WE are now prepared to look at the other side, and to find out what a Christian *is*. We have seen clearly what he is *not*. Now we ask what he *is*. In this same chapter, Paul tells us; so I shall quote his words, and turn them into the speech of the day, which you know best, as well as I can. First of all, Paul lays down a wonderful principle—

"*Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*"—That is to say, every man has a gift of grace that is his own; it may be little, it may be much; but it is *his* as much as is the very life that beats in his breast. It is a great mistake to suppose that every man is as good, as strong, as wise, in Christ, as every other man. There are those who are "least" in the kingdom, and those who are "greatest;" souls that absorb much, and souls that take in next to nothing. Yet every man has something, a special gift, a singular and incommunicable grace; a pulse that separates him by infinity from the proudest beast that would seem to challenge his supremacy. Do not suppose that one man is as much a man as any other. Some men are all life;

others grow very near to being minus quantities. If you touch the hem of some garments you are the better for it; if you live seven years with other people you hardly know why you were doomed to such companionship. Yet every man has at least one spark of fire to mark him as a bush in which God speaks. Blessed are they who see Christ in every man, and hear him in all languages, and make it a point to find out the one gleam of better things that is in every human soul. Let every man find out his own gift and work it out to its fullest possibility. Is it insight? Is it sympathy? Is it eloquence? Is it activity? Is it courage? Is it great human love? The thing is to connect all these, and each of them, with the name of Christ as a distinct gift of His, to be used in His spirit and to secure the ends which He approves. Take another quotation:

"*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*"—Mark that word "grow,"—it is full of hope and of comfort. We are to be moved onward and upward by the great law of progress. The law is not leaping, but growing; we are not to be prodigies, but honest and natural developments. What is there that grows noisily? There was no sound of trowel or hammer in building Labanon and Bashan, those great temples of cedar and oak. Little by little, is the law of all growth,—growth of body and mind, seed and root. But we *are* to grow! There is to be continual accession of strength, continual purification of refinement, continual enlargement of horizon, until in the fullest sense we rejoice in new heavens and a new earth, and a liberty

which no enemy can either trouble or curtail. Understand clearly that the tree never grows so as to be independent of its root. So we cannot bear fruit except we abide in the vine! Understand that the house which grows under the hand of the builder never presses so heavily upon the foundation as when it is wholly completed. So we shall rest the more solidly upon the rock Christ, as our spiritual character approaches completion. Other foundation can no man lay! I point this out the more distinctly that there is a danger of supposing that this growth *in* Christ may be lawfully followed by growing away *from* Christ. Some have stretched liberty into licentiousness, and in the swollenness of their unholy pride have thought to put Christ into the second place. Against the vain talk of such profane boasters I set up the law, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." Grow away from all mere ceremonies as much as you please; grow away from narrowness, bigotry, literalism, and evil judgment; loose yourselves from the oldness and boudage and fear of the iron letter; but never think of taking the branch out of the vine. What do you say to cutting off an arm and letting it set up for a whole body on its own account? If you are fond of experiments, will you dismember your body and let each limb and joint do what it can for itself? No, no, says the Apostle; "grow up into him in all things, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

I have to mourn some instances in which it has been impossible to mark anything like growth. The soul has learned its verbal lesson, and for years has repeated it with mechanical precision. Religious doctrines have been rehearsed like the multiplication table, and religious enjoyments have been gone through as melancholy duties. What wonder that religion has been misunderstood, and that an unnatural gloom has been allowed to gather around the Cross! Almost equally at fault with this want of growth has been the absurd and even irreligious notion that all growth must be uniform, so that there shall be whole rows of Christians all of one height, one colour, one shape, one weight! No allowance is to be made for constitution, for advantages or disadvantages, for species, or for climate. How foolish, how wicked! I took a piece of a trimly-kept privet hedge out the other day to walk with me through a famous wood, and very pertly did the clean-shaved privet talk. "Curious kind of growth this," said the hedgeling, looking up to great trees whose massive and verdurous branches interlocked each other a hundred feet and more high in the sunny air; "this," said the domestic privet, all shaven and shorn, "is the kind of thing I cannot for the life of me understand!" and the gossiping little fool went everywhere abusing and censuring forests older than the thrones of oldest empire! And so men cannot understand one another, and every man will judge his neighbour by the insufficient standard of himself. The fern has called the rose immodest. The sparrow charges the nightingale with liking to hear herself. The mathematician says that the poet is romantic,

and the poet says that the mathematician is a bore; and so men cannot understand each other. Now, herein exactly is the beauty of the doctrine that we have all to grow *in Christ*, and that *Christ* in whom we all grow can understand and bless us all. Our relation, you see, is in the first place to Christ, and afterward to one another. It was on this very principle that I settled a dispute last summer. A fern told me that it was too bad to be always shut up in a shady place, and that it wanted to grow beside the red rose that was shining like the very eye of the garden. The fern said, "I have as much right to be out in the sunshine as the rose has, and I *will* be out." I transplanted the little malcontent, and in one hot day the sun struck it dead with his dart of fire. Now if we be where Christ means us to be, in shade or in light, and will grow according to His will, it shall be well with us; but if we touch that which is forbidden, we shall be made to remember that it is written, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Now think of this idea of place as having much to do with our growing. One man will do best under a gloomy ministry, where the soil is very damp and the clouds are very threatening; another man will do better under a bright ministry, a hopeful, genial, summer-like ministry: one man will thrive on "Night Thoughts" and grow strong on "Meditations among the Tombs;" another will want a tune set in five sharps, and red banners streaming in the high wind. They are all right. "All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." Yet we

all live at the table of the Lord. It is so with souls ; we are very varied, yet we all find sustenance and defence and progress in the all-inclusive heart of the blessed Christ.

"*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind : and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*"—This calls us to the vitality of things : here is nothing superficial, external, or transitory ; the appeal is to the hidden life of the heart, to the very spirit of the mind ! "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Are we pure in soul ? Are we without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ? These are the questions that slay our pride and put our boasting to death. Who can stand when God is judge, or who may abide the day of His coming ! Yet, "there is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness," and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Other men call us to outward duties and are satisfied ; Jesus calls us to spiritual life and holiness, and then He says the fruit will surely be good. To work all this mystery of holiness in the heart is promised the indwelling and re-creating Spirit of God. Blessed Spirit, dwell in me ; purify me ; cleanse me to the uttermost ; make me thy living temple,—a house holy unto the Lord !

Mary: Needless Trouble.

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."—JOHN xx. 13.

THIS weeping woman, standing beside the empty tomb of Jesus Christ, is a typical rather than a unique character in human history. Specially is she typical of those people who are always missing the point in Christian narrative and Christian doctrine. They are faithful, kind, intelligent, deeply and richly sympathetic, but they miss the point. They go long journeys in order to get wisdom, but they always leave the principal thing behind them; they put away the key so carefully that they never know where to find it again, and their minds, though filled with conflicting thoughts, have lost all power of grouping events and shaping them into order and meaning. Mary rushed into the details of a controversy instead of standing a little way from it and catching its outlines and its general bearings. There is very much practical atheism in this devoted woman's talk. Though she is talking to angels, yet she has left God out of her sobbing and tearful speech, and consequently the words which ought to have glowed with a sublime faith are only feverish with personal disappointment, and more or less of peevish complaint. She speaks as if the whole question lay between certain

other people and herself; thus, "They have taken" and "I know not." She is lost where millions of other people have been lost; that is to say, in the murky and noisy region of second causes. She was calculating time by her own ill-going clock, and not taking the hour from the unchanging and truth-telling sun; just what we are all doing—and in the doing of which we bring ourselves to disappointment and tears.

Many of us ought to take our stand beside Mary. Those, for example, who are unable to see the Divine hand far above all human meddling and strife. To many of us human history is but a disorderly and haphazard movement, an undisciplined and scrambling race, a neck-or-nothing race, enlivened with rude wit or degraded by ruder pleasures. Where is the religious eye that sees God above it all, and that can trace His hand in all the grotesque and riotous features of the course? Mary said that somebody had done mischief—had taken away her Lord; the idea never occurring to her that her Lord might have taken Himself away; and thus she missed the point. She saw the Jews, the Romans, the mad rabble, the cruel and hilarious executors, clearly enough; but the Divine hand was hidden from her eyes. And what is human history without that hand? A piece of mischief, truly—a gambling speculation or a murderous fight; but when that hand is seen the whole spectacle is changed—it is a chaos out of which order will come, and music and peace that will last for ever. In the meantime we are victimised by our own senses; our eyes deceive us, and our ears and our hearts

have lost the power of completely trusting God; and so life has become an enigma without an answer, and a fight in which the strong man wins all, and that all is less than nothing and vanity. That heart-broken, crying woman is this day the centre of a vast multitude of people, all of whom are equally blind to the Supreme Presence, though, but few of them express their deprivation in tears of helplessness and sorrow.

The great company thus gathered around Mary may be increased by the addition of the innumerable host who in all ages have given themselves up to unnecessary grief. Truly there was no occasion for Mary's tears. The angels said unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Mary had her answer ready, but it was an answer founded upon a mistake. So we, too, have doubtless some explanation of our grief, but our explanation may be but a fool's answer, or a blind man's guess as to the things that are round about him. Are not God's angels often asking why men weep and mourn and pine in heaviness of heart? The angels see the things that are hidden from us. In the dead seed they see the coming harvest. Back of the bleak east wind they see the fair spring ready to spread her flowers at our feet when the unbidden and unwelcome visitor is gone. We see the underside of the pattern which God is weaving, they see the upper side in all the charm of its celestial colour and all the beauty of its infinite perfection. Over sin we may weep night and day, but over God's providence no tear of grief is either pious or reasonable. No doubt it is a providence full of mystery, a road of deep

declivities and sharp curves, with many a jungle and many a den where beasts may lurk in cruel patience for the prey; yet there is a foot-track through it all onward to the summer landscape and the harvest plain. Why weepest thou? Surely not over the child who has gone to the care of the angels, and the sweet rest of the pure skies. Surely not over the disappointment whose sharpness has taught thee thy best prayers and mellowed thy voice to the tenderest music. Why weepest thou? If for sin, weep on; if for God, your tears are not vain only, but unnatural and impious. When Mary knew but part of the case, she wept over it; when she knew it all, her joy became almost a pain by its very keenness. So shall it be with ourselves in the revelations which are to come. We cannot stop the tears now—they will come—they must come; but out of every tear shed over the unknown or misknown way of God there will come a new and surprising joy.

The company round about Mary may be increased by another large accession; those, namely, who can only recognise Christ under certain forms and in certain places. If Mary had seen the dead Christ in the grave, probably she would have felt a sad satisfaction; to look at the face cold and pain-stricken, but still sweet with ineffable tenderness, would have brought a comfort welcome to the bereaved heart. But the idea of death having been turned to life never occurred to her. She little thought that this water could be turned into wine, and that all the signs and wonders of Christ's ministry could culminate and be

repeated in the magnificent miracle of His resurrection. Christ was infinitely larger in spiritual influence than Mary had imagined, and He is infinitely larger and grander than any Church has conceived Him to be. I would to God I could adequately rebuke all theological and ecclesiastical narrowness. There are people who would rather have a dead Christ in their own sect and ritual than a living Saviour outside of their own approved boundaries. There are others who care more for their own idealised pictures of Christ than they would for the living man Himself, were He to look upon them face to face. Now, upon this matter we may all have much to learn. For my own part, I find Christ in all Churches where the Christly spirit is. Christ is not a theory; He is a divine and infinite life, infusing Himself into our spirit and history in innumerable and unnameable ways, covering and absorbing all theories, and honouring all honest thought, and reverent doubt, and pure aspiration. The people who mistake a crucifix for a cross are not unlikely to mistake a dead dogma for a living faith. Christ lives in Unitarianism and in Trinitarianism, in the expiatory atonement and in the sympathetic reconciliation, in the resonant Christian anthem and in the sweet children's song; and until this fact is recognised, and not merely recognised but illuminated and glorified, Christendom will be rather a congeries of squabbling sects than a living and indissoluble Church. But the devil of sectarianism can only be expelled by prayer and fasting. As a Protestant, I wish I loved Christ as some Papists have loved Him. As a deeply convinced believer in the Godhead of

Jesus Christ, I wish I could know Him and preach Him as some believers in His simple humanity have done; and as one who subscribes with his whole heart the evangelical creed, I wish I could get views of truth which have opened upon men who have stood on the bare rocks and slippery places of speculative doubt, or even of intellectual antagonism. What man has seen all the truth of God? In what single pulse throbs the solemn eternity? Into what sectarian hut has God crowded all the riches of heaven? You may find Christ everywhere if you seek Him with a true heart; not, perhaps, just in the way you expected, not nominally, not formally, but in all the subtlety of His spiritual power, and all the tenderness of His recovering and comforting grace. You will not suppose that we are to be blind to each other's errors, real or fancied; on the contrary, we are bound to detect and expose those errors, but we are to look for them with the eye of love, and to refute them with the tongue of charity. Controversy may be elevated into an instrument of high spiritual education, or it may be degraded into a weapon for fighting rude and godless battles.

Another addition may be made to the great crowd already gathered around Mary; those, namely, who are always talking about Christ as if He were absent: it is a historical Christ they refer to—a Christ that once was, but no longer is—a Christ taken away, hidden, or otherwise lost. Now, at the very moment of Mary's complaint, the Lord was looking at her and listening to her! She thought He was the gardener! How clearly this shows that though

we may think we know Christ, yet we know Him only in one aspect, and if we happen to see Him in any other, we actually know nothing about Him? This self-same thing is occurring every day, infinitely to the disadvantage of our Christian education and to the sad disproof of our supposed growth in spiritual perception and sympathy. We only know Christ in one place, in one ritual, in one theology, in one Church. Take Him out of these, and He becomes a common man, unknown, and suspected of stealing Christ, stealing Himself! Lord, pity our ignorance, and save it from becoming sin, and save Thy preachers from the infinite disgrace of speaking to their Lord as a suspected stranger! Probably there is not in all history so striking an illustration of not knowing Christ except in one particular form and guise. Some persons do not know Christ except from the lips of their favourite preachers. Others do not think they have kept Sunday properly unless they have attended a particular place of worship. Some people can only see Christ in church. I would see Him and hear Him everywhere; in all history, in all communions, in commerce, in art, in all the endeavours and enterprises of civilization. Ye fools and blind, ye can read the face of the sky, can you not discern the signs of the times?

This is our first Easter morning in the City Temple. If the place is not enriched with a great array of spring flowers, it is not because we are insensible to beauty; and if we have not thrilling and triumphant music, as trumpet and cymbal, and choristers learned in tone and emphasis, it is not because our hearts are ungrateful. To some men

of high taste our very simplicity may seem to make the risen Christ little better than a common man, and in this humble guise they may not know the Lord; but if the Lord Himself speak to them by name, they will forget all other music in the infinite spell of His enchanting voice.

Jeremiah.

"*The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin.*"—JER. i. 1-19.

IN the first chapter of the book which bears his name, Jeremiah gives an account of his Divine call to the prophetical office. I propose to look at that account for the purpose of finding out, if we can, whether there was anything in the call of Jeremiah which corresponds with what we now find in the call of earnest men, and whether we can be as certain of our heavenly call as Jeremiah was of his. It is very remarkable that the ancient prophets always kept steadily before them the exact way by which they were led up to their office, and were always ready to vindicate themselves by a plain statement of facts. It is remarkable, too, that they could trace their heavenly election as clearly as their earthly parentage; so much so, that, as a rule, they put on record both pedigrees, so to speak, side by side; first, that which was natural; afterwards, that which was spiritual; and the one was as much a living and indisputable fact as the other. Thus Jeremiah said, "Hilkiah was my father, and the Word of the Lord came unto me,"—two things separated by an infinite distance, yet both matters of positive and unquestionable certainty. Jeremiah would have treated with equal in-

difference or contempt the suggestion that Hilkiah was not his father and that the Lord had never spoken to him. Let us trace the history somewhat, and see what it teaches to after-times.

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

The two great blessings of *election* and *mediation* are here distinctly taught. God did not speak to the nations directly, but mediationally; He created a minister who should be His mouthpiece. Observation itself teaches us that men are called and chosen of God to do special work in all departments of life. The difficult lesson for some of us to learn is that we are called to *obscurity*, and yet this is as clearly a Divine appointment as is the choice of an Isaiah or a Jeremiah. If you look at life, you will see that the most of men are called to quietness, to honest industry, and to what is mistakenly called common-place existence. What of it? Shall the plain murmur because it is not a mountain? Shall the green fields complain that Mont Blanc is higher than they? If they have not his majesty, neither have they his barrenness. To see our calling, to accept it, to honour it, that is the truly godly and noble life! To feel that we are where God meant us to be—following the plough or directing a civilisation—is to be strong and calm. I insist that every man is born to realize some purpose. Find that purpose out, and fulfil it, if you would lovingly serve God. As a public teacher, I have no difficulty in persuading any man that he is a

Jeremiah or a Daniel, at any rate that, under certain circumstances, he might easily have turned out a Hannibal or a Wellington. He is quite predisposed in that direction of thinking, and if he would not go so far as openly to avow it, he would yet intimate that he certainly does not feel that his present situation is big enough for him. My difficulty, on the contrary, is to persuade a man that the lowliest lot, as well as the highest, is the appointment of God; that door-keeping is a promotion in the Divine gift; and that to light a lamp may be as surely a call of God as to found an empire or to rule a world.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord."

It is thus that fear and confidence make up our best life. We are sure that God has called us, yet we dread to set down our feet on the way which He has marked out with all the clearness of light. Moses said he was slow of speech; Jeremiah said he could not speak for he was a child; and we in our lesser way have set up our feeble excuses against the thunder of God. And yet, fear well becomes our mortality; for what is our strength? and as for our days, their number is small. We forget God,—His almightiness and His eternity are put out of sight, and therefore our hearts sink in dismay. And a deadly error lurks here. We are apt to mistake our fear for religious modesty, and by so much we cast indirect reproach upon others. I will speak plainly to my own

soul upon this point, well knowing that when I plead inability to do God's work, I am in reality profanely distrusting God's strength. Are not many of us standing back with a wicked excuse in our mouths? Are we not pleading illness, or weakness, or inability, or incapacity, that we may escape the heat and burden of the day? With what resentment would we encounter the suggestion of weakness were it coming from others! And yet we hold it up as a plea and a defence against the commands of heaven! Beautiful is modesty in its own place; a heavenly flower, sweet, tender, and precious; but never forget that there is something which closely imitates its loveliest features, and that its foul name is—Hypocrisy.

"Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

You made much of your own weakness, now what are you going to make of God's strength? You may obstinately persist in looking at your own small arm, or you may piously turn to the almightiness of God, and draw your power from eternity; and upon your choice will depend your whole after life. Get into the irreligious habit of measuring everything by your own resources; of asking whether you are personally equal to this or that task; and in all probability you will cower in abject fear before the burden and servitude of life: but get into the contrary habit,—the habit of setting God always at your

right hand, and of being sure that Right must prevail, that the helping angels never tire, that though God's mill grinds slow, it grinds exceeding small; fix these great facts in your heart, and then up the steepest road you will walk with a firm step, and the coldest night-wind will neither shorten nor trouble your song.

Observe the expression, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." The minister of God is to speak the words of God. A Biblical ministry must of necessity be the best ministry. It has been sometimes complained that such and such a sermon was little more than a string of texts from beginning to end. Let me say that if the texts were to the point, they would make a better statement of the truth and counsel of God than could be made by the polished sentences of the most eloquent Apollos. The deadly error into which we are apt to fall is that we must say something *original*, and I blame the people quite as much as I blame the ministers for this fatal mistake. They do not prize Scriptural teaching. They want to hear something fresh, racy, piquant, startling. They do not sit, Bible in hand, testing the speaker by the revelation; and what they ask for they get. They ask for chaff, and they get it; the great Biblical teacher is left with empty pews; his books sell slowly up to hundreds; whilst the vulgur declaimer, the savage bigot, or the frothy rhetorician, is king of the mob and the idol of book buyers. I charge you to honour the teacher who honours the Word of God. Hold him in reverence as one who thinks nothing of himself and everything of his Master. He may be unskilful in sentence-making, but his soul is aglow with the

true fire, and if you make him your companion he will satisfy and gladden you with infinite riches.

The tenth verse is as remarkable as the ninth: "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." So terrific is the power with which man is clothed by the Almighty! Every age, every country, has its supreme man; its man who stands nearest God, and gets the first hint of the Divine will. He may, indeed, be despised, and have his prophecies thrown back upon him in mocking tones, yet none the less is he the minister of God. Others may be preferred before him, yet there he stands, the interpreter of a will that must prevail, the echo of a voice that must fill the universe with a sense of its authority. The tenth verse sets forth under a personal figure the majesty and omnipotence of truth. It is not the mere man Jeremiah who is thus mighty even to terribleness; he is but representative and ministerial, and if he tamper with his mission he will be dispossessed and humbled. God never puts His own authority out of His own power. He never parts permanently with a single key from His girdle. He can scatter your riches, He can break down your health, He can crumble away your boasted position; in a word, He can mightily and wholly reclaim every gift His hand has given. Yet how He loves to incarnate His will! How He loves to find a tabernacle for His infinitude, to dwell in a flaming bush, to abide in a broken heart! "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He

gave Moses a rod ; He touched Isaiah's lips ; He caused Ezekiel to see visions ; He moved Daniel by the spirit of interpretation ; yet were they only His servants, mighty in Him, but without Him they were as other men, poor and weak.

" Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou ? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen : for I will hasten my word to perform it. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou ? And I said, I see a seething pot : and the face thereof *is* toward the north."

This power of spiritual vision is pre-eminently the gift of God. This power of parables, making them or reading them, is a deep mystery of the unseen kingdom. Is it not the gift of sight that distinguishes one man from another ? Isaiah saw the Lord seated upon His throne, high and lifted up ; Jeremiah saw a rod of an almond tree, and a seething pot whose face was towards the north ; Ezekiel saw a whirlwind and a great cloud and a fire infolding itself, and out of the midst of the fire as the colour of amber ; Daniel had the knowledge and understanding and interpreting of dreams ; Amos saw the Lord standing upon a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in His hand ; he saw also the grasshoppers in the latter growth after the King's mowings, and through a basket of summer flowers he saw the nearness of the end of Israel ; Zechariah saw a man riding upon a red horse, standing among the myrtle trees, having behind him three red horses, speckled and white ; and Malachi saw from afar the messenger going swiftly forward to prepare the way of the Lord.

"The things that are not seen are eternal." The prophet may truly say, "I hear a voice they cannot hear; I see a hand they cannot see." How the earth and sky are rich with images which the poet's eye alone can see! What a parable is spring, and what a vision from the Lord is summer, laden with all riches, gentle and hospitable beyond all parallel! O man, what seest thou? Launch out upon the sunny lake; with Pilatus in the rear and the Rhigi in front, with a distant glimpse of the snowy Wetterhorn, with a thousand shadows playing upon the quiet waters—what seest thou? With the mountains girdling thee round, as if to shut thee up in prison, and suddenly opening to let thee through into larger liberties—what seest thou? I see beauty, order, strength, majesty, and infinite munificence of grace and loveliness.

Look at the moral world, and say what seest thou. Think of its sinfulness, its madness, its misery untold, its tumult and darkness and corruption, deep, manifold, and ever-increasing. Seest thou any hope? Is there any cure for disease so cruel, so deadly? What seest thou? I see a cross, and one upon it like unto the Son of man, and in His weakness He is mighty, in His poverty He is rich, in His death is the infinite virtue of atonement. I see a cross, and its head arises unto heaven. I see a cross, and on it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from sin." I see a cross stretching its arms outward from horizon to horizon, and from it there comes a voice saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Believe in me, and live for ever." The man who sees that cross most clearly should proclaim its existence to others; and he who has most

deeply felt its power should most loudly proclaim its excellence. Blind are they who do not see it. It fills all the widening circle of civilisation; its shadow is upon every cradle and upon every grave; it touches life at every point; it is the crook in every lot, yet it is the answer of every difficulty; it is the trouble of every soul that is corrupt, and the hope of every soul that yearns for pureness and liberty. Oh, blind are they who cannot read these signs of the times!

And far away in the distance, what seest thou? Across the seething sea of time, standing high above all earthly affairs, yet inseparably connected with them? What is that glistening and dazzling object? It is fairer than the sun when he shineth in the fulness of his strength, and marvellous is its fascination alike for the evil and the good: the evil look upon it until their knees tremble and their bones melt like wax, and the good look unto it, and praise the Lord in a song of thankfulness and hope. What is it? It is a great white throne whence the living Judge sends out His just and final decrees; it is the hope of all who are good, it is the infinite terror of the heart that is bad.

The man who sees all these things clearly will be in his day as Jeremiah was in his. He will be the servant of the Lord, and he will speak boldly of things unseen; he will utter God's judgments touching wickedness, and he will be as a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land. And do you suppose that he will escape persecution and suffering? Will his word be quietly accepted, or devoutly received? Never; his life

will be a battle, his bread will be begrudged, his familiar friends will become his enemies, and they who cannot strike him with a sword will annoy him with an anonymous pen. It is impossible for an honest prophet to escape persecution. "If they have hated me they will hate you; if they have persecuted me they will persecute you," are Christ's own keen clear words. What then? Shall we live in a quietness for which we have to pay our convictions? Shall we fear those who lift up arms against us? God forbid. "They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

The Silent Looks of Christ.

"*And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, he went out.*"—MARK xi. 11.

THIS is one of the passages of Scripture that the reader may easily pass without allowing his attention to be sufficiently arrested. The *singularity* of this act will not escape your notice now that the verse is read as a text. Jesus Christ entered into the city, and into the temple; merely looked round about upon all things, and went out. The *comprehensiveness* of this act will make you feel as if you were girt about with eyes. Jesus Christ entered into the city and into the temple, and looked round about upon *all* things. The great things, and things minute and obscure and comparatively worthless. If He thought it worth while to create the daisy, will it be beneath Him to stop and look at the little beauty which He painted? We do not look upon *all* things. We look upon faces, surfaces, transient aspects of things; but Jesus looks into spirit, purpose, motive, heart, impulse, will, and all the secrets of that supreme mystery amongst us called human life.

The *silence* of this act will almost affright you. Jesus came into the city, looked round about upon all things, and did not say one word. That is terrible! When men speak

to me, I can in some measure understand what they are aiming at. But there are some looks, even amongst ourselves, that are mysteries; there are some glances shot from human eyes that trouble the beholder! Can guilt bear the lingering enquiring gaze of innocence? Does not the corrupt man fear the eye of the just man more than he would fear lightning at midnight? May not that look *mean* so much, even if it be a look of unsuspicion and of entire ignorance, so far as the immediate circumstances are concerned? Yet it *may* mean so much; and that potential mood is the hell of the bad man.

You see, then, that our text leads us to look, not at the miracles and words of Jesus Christ, but to study His *looks*, as indications of His character. And it may be profitable, after we have spent some time in examining the eyes of the Saviour, to enquire how we should *return* the looks that are so full of meaning. This is the subject of the morning, *The Silent Looks of the Son of God!*

In reading the Evangelists, have you ever noticed that Mark, above all the other writers, takes note of the looks of the Saviour? Different men see different phases of the same object. Luke began his Gospel by saying that he was going to tell Theophilus *everything*. Who can tell everything about the Son of God! I speak not only for myself, but for every minister in this house, and, I believe, for the whole Church of God, in saying that, after we have written our sermons and our books, the thing that strikes us most is their *emptiness*. We seem to have missed the very point we intended to indicate, and when we have ceased our talk and our effort, there comes upon us a

sense of having ill done what we aimed to do, and we feel as if we had not yet begun the story that is as a centre without a circumference.

"And Jesus looked round about" (Mark x. 23).—It would appear that Jesus Christ's look was, then, a *circular look*. Instead of fixing His eye upon one point, He fixed His vision upon all points, and, as it were, at the same moment of time. "And Jesus looked round about." That is an action specifically by itself. "And having looked round he saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" The look of the preacher should mean something. Earnest men should have a look peculiarly their own. What, my friend, if thy sermon has failed to take effect because thy face gave the lie to thy voice? There are looks *and* looks. When will men discriminate between things that differ? when will they cease to regard all things as alike? and when will the time come when men can see *meanings* even in unlikely things? I have seen on the plainest faces looks that had soul in them. I have seen poor people look at me, in telling the story of their trouble, in a way that has gone to my very heart, and melted it in tender sympathy with their sufferings. I have seen persons to whom intelligence of a startling nature has been brought—intelligence of broken fortune, of expired friends—who could not say one word, and yet I had rather seen a tiger than the look of disappointment and shame and fear and pity that I have seen upon some human faces. Go and tell a man who is laughing—inno-

cently laughing—that his only child has been found dead on the roadside. The man does not *talk* to you, except with his eyes and his face. There is no storm so terrible as the darkening and the raining of grief! Jesus Christ accompanied His words with a look, and sometimes left His look unaccompanied by a word.

"But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter." He looked them all into attention, and then gave them the lesson. Is He not looking here to-day? Should there be any turned heads amongst us, any indifferent eyes, any careless hearts? I thank God I believe that so many people as I see before me would not come together at twelve o'clock without earnestness in their hearts regarding this ministration of the gospel. Observe the peculiarity of the occasion. "When he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter." The look was a general caution; the rebuke was an individual application. The look was as a common judgment; the rebuke was a personal law. Jesus looks when He does not rebuke, but He never rebukes without looking. My friend, thou wouldst see more of the eye of God if thou wouldst drop the scales from thine own. But I have given my subject as the *silent* looks of the Saviour. Luke, in his twenty-second chapter, indicates a remarkable instance of such looks—viz., "*The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*" Did He speak? No. Did He cry out, "Shame!" No. What did He do? He turned and *looked* upon Peter, and broke the man's heart. May He break our hearts in the same

way ere He cut us in pieces with the sword of His anger, and utterly slay us with the breath of His judgment! He had told Peter that before the cock crowed he would deny his Master three times. Peter had just given the third denial; immediately the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter's heart of rock melted into a river of tears. What was there in the look? Does the eye of Jesus look memories at us? broken vows, oaths, pledges? Is the eye of the Saviour like a mirror, in which a man may see himself? Is the eye of Jesus Christ terrible as a sword of judgment, that it can cut to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow of a man?

Mark gives us another silent look in his third chapter and fifth verse. "And when Jesus had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand." He said nothing to the individuals themselves; He only looked round about on them with anger. I have heard of the sword that flamed in Eden, that moved from the east to the west, and back again, night and day. But oh, I could have run through that sword, methinks, compared with this circle of fiery anger which now surrounded the Son of God! anger of the most terrible kind,—anger arising out of *grief*. The anger of malice who cares for? The anger of mortified pride, vanity, ambition—who heeds it? The anger of mere selfishness,—what is the meaning of that? But when *grief* turns to anger; when *love* itself becomes wrath,—who can abide the day of its coming? Is there anything so terrible as "the wrath of the Lamb"—that greatest contradiction in words, apparently, yet that

consummation of purest anger in reality? "The Lord looketh on the heart." The Lord is *always* looking. He looketh from heaven, and beholdeth the children of men. The Lord looked to see if there were any that feared Him, and that honoured His name. There is no *protection* from His eye. This is a terrible statement to be delivered to the bad man! You are never alone! When you think you are alone, your solitude is but relative. You can take the thinnest veil and hide yourself from men, but who can hide himself behind impenetrable curtains and screenings from the eye of fire? All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do! "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" The question is unanswered and unanswerable. God fills the universe, overflows infinitude, and thou canst not escape His eye! I think I have heard something before of this silent look. You may recall it. When I read in the Apocalypse, as I have just read our morning lesson about John seeing, on the Isle of Patmos, eyes like a flame of fire, I felt that I had read something like that before. Where? Can you tell me? Young friends, who are supposed to have just read the Bible, you who have the youngest, tenderest, freshest memories, can you tell me? Where? You read something like it in the Book of Exodus. The eye of the Lord never dims. If you have once read of it, you never can forget it; if you have once seen it, it is an eternal presence!

When the Egyptians pursued Israel, and there was a halt made, a cloud came between the Israelites and the Egyptians; the one side was brightness—that is, on the

side towards the Israelites—and the other side was darkness ; *and the Lord looked out of the cloud and troubled the Egyptians !* Have I your attention? Do you follow me? The Lord *looked* out of the cloud and troubled the Egyptians, and His glory struck off the iron from the wheels of their chariots, and they were dismayed! Not a word was spoken; there was no thunder in the air. What was it then that troubled haughty Egypt, proud of her resources, fat with the marrow of her accursed victories over a bound people,—what was it that troubled the haughty queen? It was a look, *a silent* look! An argument could have been answered mayhap: if not answered, it could have been replied to. But a *look!*—who could return it? When the lightniug strikes a man, who can look at it? Aye, when the summer sun goes behind a cloud, as it were, and suddenly strikes down upon the lookers up, who can bear the sting of his fire? So, then, you will find that the eyes of the Lord are often spoken of in the holy Book. Are these eyes *terrible* then? May any one look at them? Herein is the mercy of the Lord seen. What is terrible is also gentle. "Our God is a consuming fire!" "God is love!" "He numbereth the stars!" "He bindeth up the broken in heart!" He walketh upon the wings of the wind, and the clouds are as the dust of His feet, and His utterance shakes the kingdoms and dominions of the universe! Yet not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father's notice! If the looks are terrible, they can also be benign. Hear the proof of this: "I will guide thee with mine eye." Lord, what is the history of Thine eye? the eye that troubled Egypt, and struck off

the iron from the chariot-wheels of the host of Pharaoh? the eye that divided the waters, and made them stand back, that the Lord might pass in the person of His chosen one? "I will guide thee with mine eye." The eye that makes day, and summer, and beauty, and the eternal light! Behold the goodness and severity of God! "I have heard," said the Psalmist, "that power belongeth unto God!" And he trembled, and he took up his pen again, and wrote, "To thee also, O Lord, belongeth mercy!" Omnipotence in the hand of mercy is the idea of righteous government. So the eyes of the Lord are very terrible. Flames of fire are the only symbols by which they can be likened amongst us; but they are also gentle, melting with dewy tenderness, yearning with unutterable pity; looking out for us; watching our home coming, looking over the hills and along the curving valleys, if haply they may see somewhat of the shadow of the returning child!

Will it not be profitable for us now to enquire: If such be the looks of God the Father and the Son, how should we *return* looks that are so full of significance and purpose? Are we not able to use our eyes to advantage? Hear the Word of the Lord. "*Look* unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." How? Look not with the eyes of the body, not with curiosity; but with reverence, with eagerness of heart, with determination of love, with all the urgency and importunity of conscious need. He asks us to look; to look at Himself; to look at Himself, not on the Throne of Judgment, but in His capacity as Redeemer and Saviour of the world. Have you looked? Pause! There is no need to be in haste. Have you

looked? Observe our earliest lesson this morning—viz., there is looking *and* looking. I have seen a dog look towards the sun, but he saw it not! The beast always seems to be looking upon the flowers of the meadow, but it is not seeing them! Have you *looked* with your *heart*, with your hunger, with your urgent need? Have you looked with that expectant, piercing look that means, "I *will* see?" "Yes," says one of my hearers, "I have looked, and I have a comfortable sense of having seen the Lord; but I get so weary, and jaded, and worn out by the difficulties, frets, temptations, and chafings of this earthly life, that sometimes I do not know what to do." Then let me tell you what to do. If, for a moment, I have the advantage of you, I will use my advantage to teach and comfort you, if I can. You are weary, worn, dispirited, tempted, discouraged, and do not know how to go on. Go on thus—*looking unto Jesus!* You will see how the various texts belong to one another, and constitute one piece of solid religious teaching. *Looking* unto Jesus. Returning the look of the Saviour. Not a hasty glance, but a steady, importunate, eager, penetrating "looking for." And He is only behind a veil. If you did but know it, there is hardly a cloud between! He will come from behind, and say to the heart that has waited for Him, "For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercies will I gather thee." It was better to have that small moment. There may be a monotony of kindness, a monotony of light. Better to have a momentary sense of orphanage, and then to be embraced with a still fonder clasp by the infinite love of the eternal heart!

Look unto Jesus even through your tears. Tears are telescopes. I have seen further through my tears than ever I saw through my smiles. Laughter hath done but little for me; but sorrow and a riven heart have expounded many passages in the inspired volume that before were hard, enigmatical reading. Blessed be God, we can see Jesus through our tears. He knows what tears are. Jesus wept! The eyes that John saw as a flame of fire the Jews at the grave of Lazarus saw as fountains of water. "And coming near unto the city, when he beheld it, he wept over it." No man can fathom the depth of that river, or tell the bitterness of that sorrow. You have tears. Every man amongst us has his tearful times. But we use our tears wrongfully if we do not lift up our eyes and look through them unto Jesus in the heavens! So much for the comfortable side of this. Dare I turn to the other side? Surely, for I am a steward only. May I say another word that shall not be so tender? Surely, for I am an echo, not a voice. Am I here to make a Bible for the comforting and soothing of men, and not to expound a Bible that looks all ways, and pierces all things? If I now speak with apparent harshness, believe me that it is a cry of pain, that I may bring some men to consideration and decision in a right direction. My subject is the silent looks of the Saviour—the silent looks of God—and the method in which men are to return the glances of the Divine eyes. Let me say that those who will not look now *shall* look! The great sight shall not perish from the horizon without their beholding it. Hear these words—"They shall look upon me whom they have

pierced! They would not look upon me, but they *shall* do so!" The great cross shall not be taken up and set away in the heavens as a centre of holy fellowship without those who despised it having one look at it! What will be the consequence of their looking? They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn! The look was too late; the look was not in time. You have put your fingers in your ears while the sweet music of the Gospel has been appealing for the attention of your heart; you have shut your eyes when the King has come in to show you His beauty. But He says He will not break up this scheme of things without every eye beholding! Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him shall look upon Him. Shall I add another word that no human tongue is fit to speak? How shall I utter it? If I could let my heart say it, I would. But it must be spoken with all the incompetence and brokenness of the voice. There shall be a cry in the latter time, and the cry shall be this—"Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne!" Hide us! What from? "The sword?" No. "The terrible phenomena?" No. But from the *face*—that anguished face, that smitten face, that insulted face! Oh! I see the marks the thorns made! I see the red streaks upon it that I made when I smote Him in the face and said, "Prophesy!" Oh, hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne! Shall it come to this? Is He not the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely? Is there any one whose beauty is to be compared with His? You say, "Our God is love." Yes, "Our God is a consuming fire!" You say, "The eyes of the

Lord are a comfort to His people." So they are. But the eye of the Lord struck off the iron from the wheels of the Egyptians on the night I have just spoken about.

We shall have to look; the only question is, how? Are we prepared for His coming? How are we prepared for His face? By going to His Cross. He proposes that we should meet Him in His weakness. He appoints the place. He says, "Meet me where I am weakest; when my right hand is maimed, and my left, when my feet are pierced with iron, and my side is gashed with steel, and my temples are crushed with cruel thorns,—meet me there!" Then having met Him there, when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, He will be the same Saviour, as gentle and as pitiful as ever. And now, the Lord's hands are His again, He will use them for the opening of the door of His kingdom, and the lifting up of all who put their trust in Him!

Present to hear God's Word.

"*Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.*"—ACTS x. 33.

LET this be the spirit of our service to-night, and it is impossible but that great good will be done. This is my purpose, let it be yours. The text puts me into the position of a messenger, and it puts you into the position of listeners. The supposition is that I have been in deep communion with God, that I have been studying His word, and that I have a message immediately from Himself to you. There is nothing unnatural in that supposition. A minister of Christ should be a help to the attainment of higher spiritual life and truth; his time is spent in the study of the Scriptures; he is protected from many of the roughest collisions and controversies of ordinary life; and as he knows, or ought to know, much of the Divine will, so he may claim to be a messenger from heaven so long as he keeps clearly within the limits of the written word.

What is the purpose of the listener? "To hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Not to be momentarily entertained; not to be charmed, delighted, or enchanted; not to listen to assurances of false hope or promise of comfort; but to hear the distinct word of God,

though it be stern and rousing as a command. Now as it is both impossible and undesirable to go over all the things commanded of God, I propose to fix upon two of them, and to make them as clear as I can.

My first message as a Gospel preacher you will find in these words: "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." That is the starting-point of all holy progress. Until we have repented, we have not begun to travel the upward way. The very first step has not been taken. You may have been debating, contending, speculating, and passing on from one opinion to another, but if you have not repented, you have been hammering cold iron, you have been beating the air, you have been lifting water with a sieve,—all is useless, because you did not start with a right *condition of heart.* The man who deeply and truly repents is broken-hearted, helpless, ashamed of himself, borne down by intolerable sorrow for sin, cannot lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, says he will rise and go to his Father. Now the soil is ready for the seed; now the heart longs for a message from heaven; now all the desires of the soul are gathered up into one fervent prayer, *What must I do to be saved?* To a man in such a spiritual condition as that, the Gospel preacher has a direct message. The Gospel preacher cannot answer curious questions; he cannot set himself up as the clever reader of difficult conundrums; he is not at liberty to read the deepest mysteries of the kingdom in the hearing of the mocker, or to cast pearls before swine; his message is to the lost, the penitent, the broken-hearted, and to such only, at the beginning. Repentance is the basis on which he

builds. Suppose a man has grievously offended you, etc. ("Can do nothing with him.")

Do not begin by attempting to take repentance to pieces intellectually, saying it consists of this and that; you must *feel* it to know it: there is no mistaking the fiery shame which burns in the heart, the sting of remorse which makes the soul sore with an incurable wound, the river which gushes from the shattered rock of self-reproachful obstinacy; you will know it when you feel it, and not to be able to explain it may be the best proof of its reality.

2. I am commanded of God to call men to belief, to faith, to trust in Christ as the only Redeemer of mankind. If your heart is in the right state, the next step is to go out of yourself for help. You will find that help is not in yourself. You will feel that your sin puts away the possibility of self-salvation. You can do nothing. The outgoing of your soul must be for mercy,—"God be merciful to me a sinner," must be your prayer. The very act of belief is a movement towards health of soul. It is equal to the "Rise up and walk" spoken to the lame man; the very attempt to rise bringing with it the power to do so. Belief is a transaction. It is not a mere acknowledgment of truth, it is going over to truth, receiving it, embracing it, loving it with unreserved affection.

The one word which Christ seemed to use more than any other was "believe." It was to the faith-life that He called mankind. He seemed to say—Come away from everything you can see and touch and handle, and cross over into another world called Faith; when you are in the

act of crossing over you will seem to be losing everything; you will feel as if there was nothing to grasp, and as if you were calling your soul to live upon nothing; but that feeling is only for a moment,—take the step, and you will at once enter into a great liberty. So much for faith as an act of the mind.

But faith as an act of salvation has a great help on the road; we are to have faith in *Him.* "Whosoever believeth in Him;" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" "I live by faith on the Son of God;" and in calling us to this faith, there are actually several appeals to the senses. Herein is a mystery; we have so many stepping-stones, so to speak, over which we pass, and then at last we plunge into the infinite sea of Divine love. In the process there seems to be a physical reason behind every spiritual act. Thus if I believe in Christ I do not believe in an abstraction, but in a *man;* that is physical,—I do not believe in a dreamer, I believe in a *worker;* that is physical,—I do not believe in a sentiment, I believe in a *sacrifice;* that is physical,—I do not believe in pretension, I believe in *blood;* that is physical. I want you to see therefore that faith is not a blind assent, a kind of delirious ecstasy got up on purpose to swallow mysteries: it is a high intellectual and moral effort; it comes after a well-established and splendid history; it is a confession of a great heart-want; it is a sign of the loving and absolute acceptance by the heart of the whole work and claim of the Son of God.

I call upon you to believe. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." "Believest Thou that I am

able to do this?" "According to thy faith be it unto thee." "All things are possible unto him that believeth." "Lord, increase our faith."

Up to this point I am as sure as I am of my own existence that I have delivered the message of God. If I begin to analyse "repentance" and to give a metaphysical definition of "faith," I may use words of my own, and so may obscure the word of the Living One; and I may tempt you to ask questions and state objections, and ruin yourselves by your own one-sided cleverness. The Gospel is not an argument; it is a declaration, it is a conditional amnesty, it is a proclamation of the year of the Lord.

Let me ask you, then, are you really in earnest about knowing the message of God? Listen to me merely for entertainment, and you will be disappointed; listen for God's voice in mine, and you will hear it. Imagine this to be a great prison and yourselves to be prisoners. You are bound here. There is not a man at liberty to do as he pleases. Suppose that I have come with a message from the Queen, saying, Every man here may be set free who will confess his disloyalty and repent of it and seek the Queen's pardon. I am a messenger. I have not come to argue with you, but to state the terms. I may try to persuade you, and I may try to subdue your hardness; but having done this, I return to the proclamation, and say, This is the royal word, and I can tell you neither less nor more. But suppose you do not believe that it *is* the royal word? That does not alter the fact of the case. Denial is no argument. If I deny your honesty, I do not prove you dishonourable. To deny that the sun shines does not

bring darkness upon the earth. The best thing you can do is to put the offer to the test. Rise, and try to go out. To sit still and argue is madness. Bring the matter to a practical issue. Prove the message to be either true or false. That is precisely what has to be done with the Gospel. Bring the message to a practical issue. Repent, believe, flee to Christ, and until you have done this you word of denial goes for nothing; until you have done thi let God be true and every man a liar.

The Early Life of Daniel.

"*And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.*"—DAN. i. 3-5.

SEE how the fancies of men are as threads which are worked into the web of Divine Providence. Nebuchadnezzar, in this case, displayed his taste—gave licence to his fancy—in commanding that the children who should be elected to this high honour and privilege should be children of the king's seed and princes. He was not extending any favour to the common people. He wished to have with him only the noble persons of the blood royal, and those who had in them the kind of quality that could be turned best to his own account. He did not fully know what he was doing. What man amongst us is there who knows the whole meaning of any act that he does? He has a meaning which he knows tolerably well, but behind every act there are outgoings, relationships,

purposes, connections, of which the doer himself little dreams. And were those men comforted for their captivity? They had been taken away from their own land; they were the slaves of Nebuchadnezzar the king, and the king appointed them meat from his own table and wine from his own vintage. Were the captives, then, satisfied? Were all old memories banished from their recollection, all tender associations taken out of their hearts, and were they amply repaid for their exile and their captivity by eating of the king's food and drinking of the king's wine? Let me lay special stress upon this point, if you please, for there is in it a great lesson to us all. It shows how secondary advantages may accompany the deepest humiliations. If you look at the food and the wine only, you will say, "These poor youths are well off; truly they cannot be said to be in captivity at all if they eat and drink just what the king himself takes." This is the danger of taking a superficial view of our life and its surroundings. We look at what we have in the hand; we see the bounties under which our table is groaning, and we say, "Well, whatever may be said by preachers and by moralists, after all we are doing tolerably well." Please to understand that the men who were offered the king's bread and the king's wine were slaves. If you look at the advantages I describe, those advantages are merely secondary and relative. Underneath all these condescensions on the king's part and enjoyment on the part of the exiles, there is the grim and terrible fact that the men were not masters of their own time. And yet how well off they seemed to be. The king sent them a,

portion of his own meat and of the very wine which he drank. What more could they desire? Nothing, if they were mere animals. Regarding yourself as a mere animal, what more do you want than to eat and drink, and to be well clothed and sheltered? Regard yourself as a being possessed of spiritual life, and endowed with a splendid destiny, and then tell me how far any food, any wine can satisfy the inner appetencies—the hunger and thirst of the soul. Take a man's freedom from him; lock him up in a chamber lined with velvet, and made glowing and lustrous with the highest productions of art: what are they to him? Nothing, if he be more than an animal. He says, "These are beautiful things, but I cannot see them; I cannot look upon them; they mock me. I want my liberty; I would rather be running on the wildest hills of my native country than be mocked by all this ease, and luxury, and light, and beauty, and music."

When I was in the United States of America, I heard this statement:—A slave, who had served his master well, was honoured in his master's will with his freedom, and with the freedom of his wife and children, and with a donation of 500 dollars; and when the will was read to the man, he said, "What have I done that I should be turned away from the old estate; I will not have my freedom and I will not have the dollars. I will remain here and be what I have been for the last twenty years. My old master and his wife were kind to us in our sorrow and affliction; what do I want with my freedom? Go into the North, where I shall be sneered at, and go amongst strangers that don't care for me! No, please

let me remain on the old ground." And that was repeated as an argument for slavery. The reasoning proceeded in this wise: How could slavery be so bad a thing as the abolitionists have pictured, when a man who had offered to him his freedom, his wife's freedom, the freedom of his children, and a gift of money, deliberately refused it, and even passionately rejected it? And at first sight there did seem to be something in the reason, but really and truly that reasoning tells against slavery, not for it. Any system that could take out of a man his instinctive love of freedom, any system that could so far de-humanise a man as to make him prefer captivity to slavery, is a system that has damnation written upon its forehead by the finger of God. I am afraid there are persons who are reasoning just so about the world, the flesh, and the devil;—people who say that preachers and moral teachers generally take quite a false view of sin in saying that the sinner has a hard time of it, and that the way of transgressors is hard. "Ha, ha!" say they, "if they knew what we have to eat and what we have to drink —a portion from the king's table—they would talk differently, and their sermons would be less gloomy." There is something in the reasoning; but as in the former case, so in this, the reasoning tells against the sinner. Any course of conduct that can make a man apparently happy without God, that can take him down to that low point of humanity which is satisfied with mere food and drink, is a course of conduct which will end in the annihilation of all that is noble and beautiful in human nature.

When the king's arrangements were made known to

Daniel, and to those who were elected to stand with him and to undergo this training, we read in the eighth verse the following words :—"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank ; therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." In the first instance there was a religious difficulty. Daniel had been brought up in the Mosaic institutions, and, therefore, he had been trained to abjure all meat that had been offered to idols, and all drink that had been laid upon the altar of forbidden gods. He was a religious man from home! He was a man who took the commandments into captivity with him! Alas! there are some of us who can throw off our old selves and do in Rome as the Romans do with a vengeance. Daniel, driven into captivity, took his religion with him. When we are thrown into difficult circumstances, do we take our religious faith with us? When we go to other countries, do we take with us the old home training? Do we repeat the commandments as they were thundered from Sinai, and do we re-pronounce the oath we took when we gave ourselves to the Saviour, as He hung upon the cross, and welcomed us to His love, and kingdom, and service? That is a poor religion which can be put off like a garment we are tired of for the time being, and can be put on again to serve occasion. How independent man is who has risen above the point of the merely animal life! Temperance all the world over is independence. Moderation means mastery. There are some men in the world who will not be pampered; Daniel was one of them ; his compeers

belonged to the same class. There are men, alas! whom you can seduce from paths of righteousness and services of duty by offering them wine when it is red in the cup. If they are going upon the King's business and you hold up wine in the air, and say, "Come, taste," the King's business may perish. They are drawn aside; they are slaves of their appetites. Their arms are free; their hands are not bound; their limbs have upon them no mark of fetter or manacle; but still, they are the bondsmen of their passions. Is not he a strong man who can pass by the well-laden table and say, "I will not sit down to the feast because I have religious reasons. I have a vow to keep; I have an errand to accomplish; I have a message to deliver"?

You remember when a young man went arm in arm with John Wesley into a room that was well provided with all luxuries for the table. He whispered to the preacher, "There is not much self-denial here, Mr. Wesley." "No," said that keen wit; "but there is a fine field for its exercise."

In order to hold yourselves masters of your appetites, begin early. It is no use a man of forty-five years of age beginning to say he is going to turn over a new leaf; the leaves won't be turned then. I think, perhaps, I may be speaking discouragingly to some man who is making at that time of life a resolution to be better. Well, to resolution, to perseverance, to devout energy, it is possible, but it is not easy. Young man, lay down your cigar; it will do you no good. Throw away your pipe; it does not make you manly, it only makes you a nuisance to other and

better people: and don't touch strong drink of any kind whatsoever. This is the testimony that I have to bear: that he who gives way to these things in his youth is committing suicide by inches. He is taking away his will-power; he is dulling his finest spiritual sensibilities. It does not tell upon him all at once, he may live to be an old man and say, "It is a very slow poison." What he might have been he never thinks of; he only sees what he is, a tough, much-enduring man; whereas, he might have been a very prince and king, and guide, and friend among the highest classes of the land. Be sure of this, you can never do wrong if you are a temperate, you cannot be wrong if you are total abstainers. You cannot get wrong if you say, "No, I will not touch this. I will have few habits, and they shall be simple, and pure; such as can be named in the hearing of the most virtuous, and practised in the sight of the keenest moral critics." Will that, then, save you? It will certainly not damn you. Is this, then, all the gospel I have to preach? It is the beginning. It is far away enough; in fact, it does not touch the great vital questions at all; but seeing that I have to deal with people of all kinds, I am obliged to give lessons elementary as well as intermediate and final, and to the young men before me I would preach from this example of Daniel, the duty, the beauty, the comfort, the grandeur of the discipline that says, "The food is excellent, the wine is the most delicious that ever was offered by the vintages of earth, but I say 'no' to them both, I will touch not, taste not, handle not." It is something early in life (for Daniel was quite a young man at the time the text speaks

of him) to say "no" with a thrilling emphasis. You talk about discipline! Discipline is a manifold term: it covers a great deal of ground. Let me ask you to attend to the discipline of saying "no." I love to see the practice of manly sports of the right kind: running, leaping, swimming, and divers gymnastic exercises. I rejoice exceedingly in all these athletic pastimes, and in all these disciplinary sports and enjoyments. They have a great purpose to serve, but there is a still higher discipline—a discipline of the soul; the discipline which enables a man to look at a bodily advantage and to say, "I will not touch it;" the discipline which enables a man to receive an invitation, on gilt-edged paper and scented, to spend an evening with sinners in their gluttony and their wine-bibbing, and that enables him to put it in the fire. No man can do so in a right spirit, without taking a step in the upward direction. As a minister, visiting all parts of the country for upwards of twenty years, I have never gone anywhere that my being an anti-smoker was an objection to my going: I have gone to many places however where my smoking would have been a deadly objection. You cannot go anywhere where discipline will be a disadvantage to you, and where the power of saying "no" to appetites and tastes will go against you; but in life you will be very often placed in circumstances where your longings, your hungerings, and evil habitudes, will stand in your way and injure your prospects. My hope in this matter is in the young. As to the old, I have little or no hope; they are gone. They will hear our lectures and sneer at them. We may speak to them about modera-

tion, but the devil has the better of them. They cannot hear, for their ears are waxed heavy.

Daniel said to the man who was in charge, and with whom God had given him favour, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who did eat the portion of the king's meat." "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." Sometimes we say we do not know how very poor people can manage! Because we take a false estimate of life altogether. You could do with nine-tenths less than you take to keep up that pampered body of yours. I speak now about the great majority of people in saying that they would be better, cooler, healthier, and altogether improved, if they could deduct three meals a-day, and make the remaining meal nine-tenths less rich than it is at present. It takes very little to keep life going, if we did but know it. God has not founded society upon a basis that requires every man to spend £5,000 a-year. He has so constituted human life and human society, that very, very little will do, and there is plenty on the face of the earth for every man; if a man strains himself to be a glutton and a wine-bibber, an absorbent of everything that comes in his way, he has lost the Divine line of physical training, and is

taking more than is meet, and not returning to society an equivalent for what he consumes. What had these young men? Pulse and water. Why, some of us would have thought, when we were in our teens, as Daniel and his fellows were, that we were being starved if we had only porridge. Ah! that is the stuff for making men of you. Depend upon it, your venison-fed men will go down, and be quite exhausted and want to sit down on the first stile, when the porridge-fed man goes on mile after mile, and is as fresh at the end of the day as he was at the beginning. God has been pleased so to make you, that it requires very little indeed to keep your heart going, your pulse beating in freshness, in vitality, in strength, and in comfort. I am speaking now, remember, to the young. When a man gets towards fifty years of age, I turn very liberal with him. I am not a cynic: I am not an ascetic. I do not limit and bind a man down to the merest elementary line. When a man gets over forty years of age and has worked well up to that time, I can indulge him to almost any extent. I then look at the thirty years he has had of hard work and noble endurance, and I exclaim, "I have nothing to say to you: you are now a full-grown man; consider yourself, consider your circumstances; see what is best for you, and do what is right in your own eyes." But to the young I am a severe disciplinarian, and I engage that twenty years after, they will come to me and thank me for my discipline. Not one man, but many men have come to me, almost to curse the memory of their father and their mother, in that in early life they allowed them to do just what they pleased. They were

brought up to gratify every whim, they were allowed to follow every inclination and every impulse, and then at twenty-one they were men of no strength of character, and were left to be the sport of all combinations of circumstances.

See how right-doing is always willing to be proved. Daniel was willing to take a space of ten days for the proof of the proposition which he submitted to the men who had charge of them. This is characteristic of all right-doing. If a man comes before me with a right case, sound through and through, he says, "Submit it to any test you please. I leave it in your hands. Do in the matter what you think is right." That which is honest will bear probing; that which is complete in its morality will bear searching into. Now, this is precisely what the Apostle Paul says to us about religion itself, and about the whole sphere and scope of life, "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good;" and when I stand before you as a Christian teacher, it is not to impose something upon you, but to say, "This is the truth; this is the doctrine which appears to me to be the Divine teaching. I expound, I enforce, I apply. Now that I have done my utmost, you go and prove it for your own selves." Oh that men were wise that they would consider these things; that they would reason with God and know the meaning of that to which He calls them! And so we read that, "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." I wish you to dwell upon this for one moment, to show you that

God interposes so as to quicken the intellect, so as to give higher sagacity to the understanding, so as to make a man mentally robuster and stronger. God has jurisdiction in the province of ideas. He can stimulate the brain; He can make us fertile in suggestion; He can quicken and expand our fancy; He can give us intellectual dominion. Religion has never failed to do this. Every religious man is the more intellectual for his religion. He may not be very intellectual even with his Christianity, but he would be less so without his faith in God.

Young man, believe me, if you lack wisdom, ask of God. He giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not. I myself have been just where you are. I know your difficulties and your trials. I have been exposed to temptations; put in slippery and dangerous places. I know what it is to be short of an idea; to be brought to that pass that I did not know what my next step in life was to be. All my counsellors have been struck dumb, my advisers have abandoned me on the right hand and on the left, and I have not known what to do; and in that extremity I have said to God, "Give Thy poor, wandering, blind servant wisdom; give him the key to this lock. When my father and my mother forsake me, O Lord, take Thou me up. When friend and counsellor have abandoned me, oh! show me the right way;" and I have never gone to God with that filial, simple faith without leaving a burden behind and returning with a song. God gives a man ideas in business. God gives the physician ideas when he has to deal with a difficult case. It is not

needful for the Almighty to turn the universe about, or to overrule, or suspend, or destroy what are called "great natural laws." It is only needful for Him to flash another beam of light into a man's mind to turn him in another direction in his thinking, and he will find that the laws of nature need not be disturbed, because within their beneficent working there lies the very suggestion he needs, the very answer he wants. His own interpretation of the laws of nature have been shallow and inadequate. What is nature? A handful of mud, a star, a world, a planet, a man? Nature is the all-inclusive term, with God at the centre, and every angel and every insect He ever made grouped within the immeasurable circumference. Have you difficulties in your business? Ask God for wisdom. Have I difficulties in my ministry? Let me go into my closet, and shut the door and pray to my Father that seeth in secret, and I will come out with a light flashing from my face as if I had seen God, or been caught in the radiance of His throne. This is matter of personal testimony. The day has come in which men must speak for themselves, otherwise we shall have a horrible, grim, comfortless negation. Let every man, therefore, who has received a mercy at the Lord's hands hold it up and say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The one point of application which I have before me is this: we are in bondage, and the devil wishes to pamper us. Joseph was in prison; he had favour with the keeper of the gaol, but that favour went but a small way to comfort the heart of him who was

groaning under undeserved captivity. Bad men have great privileges. Vicious men seem to have the best of it if we take into view one world only, or one set of circumstances alone. I am aware that virtue often sleeps on a hard pillow, and is sheltered by a roof that is beaten upon fiercely and destructively by the wind and the rain. I know that vice in some cases has all its pockets full of gold and silver, and that godliness has not known sometimes where to lay its head. I know that my own feet have well nigh slipped when I have seen the prosperity of the wicked, and known that there are apparently no bands in their death. They are not troubled as other men, and the drop that makes my cup bitter sometimes seems not to have fallen to their lot; but I chide myself for such poor thinking when I remember that I see but a point and not the circumference, a part and not the whole, an infinitesimal fraction and not the integer. When I see all from the altitude of the sanctuary above, I shall know that the men who have caused my complaining and my distrust, have been set in slippery places, and that they have been lifted up but a few inches that they might be dashed to the ground with more terrific violence. Am I under the impression that you have nothing to show if you are unregenerate sinners and ungodly men? You have a great deal to show. Very probably you have gold and silver goblets, and ornaments, a great house, and troops of friends; and, looking at your circumstances from one point of view only, those circumstances appear to be decidedly in your favour; but what of the ultimate issue? I have heard of great houses

coming down in the night time. I have heard of a man who was going to pull down his barns and build greater, being lost in the dark stream called Night, which runs between one day and another, so that on the day when he was going to build, the architect could not find him, and the builder called for him, but he made no response. How is it with ourselves? Have we little? If the blessing of God be upon it we have much. We may be poor in this world's goods; but if we are rich in faith we are rich for ever. Are we well-to-do? Then let us be humble, helpful to others, benevolent, beneficent. Don't let us praise ourselves as if we were makers of our own prosperity. There are men in England to-day whose wealth is almost boundless, who are as simple, modest, gentle, noble as it is possible for men to be. The evil is not in the prosperity but in the wrong use of it. The evil is not in being rich, but in being proud, haughty, self-sufficient. Young man, let me ask your attention to this one point. You have the king's bread, you have the king's wine, but you are in captivity, and don't be deluded, blindfolded by secondary advantages, by relative privileges, when down under all things is the grim, terrible fact that you are a slave. What is it though a man have a fine board, and a fine house, and fine surroundings, if his soul be in captivity, if he be less a man than he is a slave. Who can make us free? Jesus Christ. "If ye know the truth, the truth shall make you free. If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." The liberty of the sons of God is a glorious liberty. I invite you to the cross, that you may become bondsmen of the

Son of God. I invite you to the slavery of love. I ask you to become prisoners of Jesus Christ; slaves and servants of Him, who, "though in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a slave, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." To be His slave is to be a freeman for ever.

[*Printed from Reporter's notes of a Sermon preached in Exeter Hall.*]

OUTLINES AND NOTES.

[The following are little more than mere sketches of sermons, and are intended for ministers, teachers, and other readers, who can see the meaning of an indication without having everything done for them in detail.]

The Mutilated Bible.

"*He cut it with the penknife.*"—JEREMIAH xxxvi. 23.

THE man who did this was Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. Jeremiah received the word of the Lord, but being "shut up" he could not go into the house of the Lord; he therefore sent for a man called Baruch, and dictated to him what God had revealed during three-and-twenty years; and Jeremiah sent Baruch to read the roll "in the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting-day." The report of what was written in the roll got into the king's house, and first of all the princes desired to hear it, saying unto Baruch, "Sit down now and read it in our ears." Great fear came upon them, and they said, "We will surely tell the king of all these words." They took the roll from Baruch, and advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves and to let no man know where they were concealed. The king having been made aware of the facts, sent Jehudi to fetch the roll. "Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month, and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him." When Jehudi had read three or four leaves, the king took the roll out of his hand, and cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth until the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth (ver. 23). This treatment of

the Divine word did not occur in this case once for all; this self-same thing is being done every day in so-called Christian lands; the penknife is as busy as ever; and I propose to inquire somewhat concerning the excision and the mutilation of the Divine testimonies.

1. It may be profitable first of all to spend a moment in considering the object which God has in view in writing His word and sending His written messages to mankind. This object is most pathetically set forth in these memorable words: "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I propose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (ver. 3). *That* is why God has given us the Bible! Not to *bewilder* us, not to start us on courses of intellectual *speculation*, not to tempt our *curiosity*, not to found *rival sects*, but to bring us to Himself to obtain forgiveness of iniquity and sin. *The one object of the Bible is the salvation of mankind.* If that could be kept in view, we should be spared endless and useless controversies upon subordinate and incidental subjects.

2. But, secondly, man is so unwilling to hear anything unpleasant or disagreeable about himself that he gets into a wrong temper before he actually knows what God's object is. Jehoiakim only heard three or four leaves read, and he was so annoyed with the delineation of the wickedness of Israel and Judah, and with the judgments and threatenings of God, that he cut the roll with the penknife and cast it into the fire. Observe that. He did not hear the *whole* roll. Did any man ever destroy the Bible who knew

it *wholly?* Many a man has thrown it into the fire who has heard or read a *part* only, but I know not that any man who has known the Bible wholly and thoroughly has ever attempted to destroy it.

The difficulty is in the "three or four leaves." There are men to-day who having heard three or four leaves of Genesis have cut it with the penknife. They cannot get over the six days and the talking serpent, so they cut the roll with the penknife. Or if they begin another book, they are offended by the extraordinary numbers of people killed in war, and the romantic ages of the patriarchs; so they cut the roll with the penknife. Or if they begin elsewhere, they are offended by the descriptions of human nature, its depravity, its helplessness, its horrible sin; and having heard three or four leaves, they cut the roll with the penknife. Now the Bible is pre-eminently a work not to be read for the first time in sections of three or four leaves; it must be read in its entirety, that all its parts may assume their just proportions and their appropriate colour. Grant, indeed, as we must gladly do, that now and again a single verse has led to enquiry and to enlightenment, and to salvation; but the point is that in all such cases there has been a diligent and profitable study of the entire word.

3. It is very noticeable that though Jehoiakim cut the roll and cast it into the fire, the words were all rewritten, and the impious king fell under the severe and fatal judgment of God,—"his dead body was cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost" (ver. 30). Men have not destroyed revelation when they have destroyed the Bible.

"The word of the Lord abideth for ever." Look at the history of the book called the Bible in proof of this. It has been cut, burned, proscribed, deposed, and branded with every form of opprobrium,—yet there it is! The pen-knife cannot reach its spirit, the fire cannot touch its life. The history of the Bible is one of the proofs of its inspiration.

4. The desire to cut the Bible with the penknife and to cast it into the fire, is quite intelligible because in a sense profoundly natural. The Bible never lures human attention by flattering compliments: it says the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that there is none righteous, no, not one; that the thoughts of the hearts of the children of men are evil, and that continually: it says that there is no peace to the wicked; that though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished; that the wicked shall be turned into hell; and that every man must be born again. What wonder that such a book should be cut with a knife and cast into the fire? What wonder if the leper should break the mirror which shows him his loathsomeness?

5. This desire to mutilate the holy word shows itself in various ways, some of them apparently innocent, others of them dignified with fine names and claiming attention as the last developments of human progress. *Human nature shows itself most vividly in the treatment of the Bible.* Nothing would delight human nature more than to be allowed to use a penknife upon the inspired roll. Let us see what would become of the Bible if this free use of the penknife were allowed. The bad man I shall for the present ex-

clude; we know what he would do with the knife. It will surprise you more if you think what use would be made of the penknife by people who have no wish really to injure the Bible.

First. Look, for example, at the use made of the *sectarian* penknife. The Arminian cuts out or cuts down the words predestinated, elect, and foreordained; the Calvinist does the same with the words "whosoever will;" the Independent pares down the passage "he that believeth and is baptised;" the Baptist uses his knife upon "I thank God that I baptised none of you;" the Episcopalian cuts out little pieces of Congregationalism, and the Congregationalist does the same with Episcopacy.

Second. Look at the use of the *philosophical* penknife. The letter is cut down to nothing, and revelation becomes a question of consciousuess, so that the inquiry is not so much What is written? as, What do you feel? Not, What is the law? but, What is the state of your imagination? Not, What are the facts? but, What is the probability as suggested by reason and the higher criticism?

Application.—From these reflections we may well learn to hold the roll as inviolable, holy, sufficient, final. Let us add nothing, subtract nothing: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

The Future considered as Unkown yet Well Known.

"*Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*"—DANIEL ii. 45.

"*Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*"—PROVERBS xxvii. 1.

OUR subject this morning is thus divided into what would appear to be two opposite and irreconcilable parts. The subject is the Future, and we are to find out what is known and also what is unknown about it. The Future is of intense interest to every one of us. What we would give if we knew exactly what will happen to-morrow, or what will be the detailed result of our schemes, or what will be the answer to letters involving our peace, fortune, joy! The future is so near and yet so far! It is the very next thing we shall come upon, and yet it spreads out over all the spaces of eternity: it is an hour; it is an everlasting duration,—it is measurable as a human span; it is as illimitable as infinitude! It is the riddle which vexes us beyond all others, because we feel as if we ought to know an answer which must be simple and easy. You

will see, then, that our subject touches every man's life, and ought therefore to compel every man's most religious attention.

Let me suggest, in the first place, that we owe a great deal both in the way of stimulus and in the way of education to the very mysteriousness of the future. What poetry is there in a straight line? What enjoyment is there on a road that is never bent into curves or broken into undulations? It is expectancy—call it hope or fear—that gives life a rare interest: hope itself sometimes brings with it a sting of pain, and fear now and again brings with it even something of weird pleasure. Hope turns the future into a banqueting house. Ambition forecasts the future with great plans of attack and defence. Fear anticipates the future so as to get from the outlook restraint and discipline. Life that has no future would be but a flat surface, a stiff and cold monotony, a world without a firmament,—a mere death's ground occupied by people not yet quite fit for burying! But with a future, it is a hope, an inspiration, a sweet and gracious promise; it is, too, a terror, for we know not what is behind the cloud, nor can we say what foe or friend will face us at the very next corner! We live a good deal in our to-morrows, and thus we spend money which does not fairly belong to us; yet how poor we would be if we could not turn our imagination to some account, and mint our fancies into some little gold just to chink in our hands that we may scare our immediate poverty away! What beautiful drives we have had in the carriage which we are going to buy in a year or two! How often we have laid out the garden

which is going to be ours in ten years' time! In our childhood we set up fine houses with broken earthenware, and before we outgrew our jackets and pinafores we had made eternal friendships and set our proud feet on a conquered and humbled world! And yet the future is always in front of us, a shy but persistent coquet, vouchsafing a smile but throwing a frown over it, and telling us to come on, yet leaving us to topple over an unseen stone and to fall into an unmapped pit which we could never have discovered had it not first half killed us! The past has become a confused, dull, troubled noise, as of people hastening to and fro in the night-time; but the future is a still small voice, having marvellous whispering power, with a strange mastery over the will, soothing us like a benediction, and anon chilling us like a sigh in a graveyard. The past is a worn road; the future is a world in which all the ways have yet to be made. I would bind you, then, to a high general estimate of the future, as being, by the very fact of its being future, a high educational influence,—an influence that holds you back like a bit in your foaming lips, an influence that sends you forward with the hunger of a great hope relieved by satisfactions which do but whet the desire they cannot appease. Thank God that there is a future; that there are days far off; that there are clouds floating in the distance, beautiful enough to be the vesture of angels, solemn enough to be the sheaths of lightning.

Passing from these general observations to more detailed inquiry, you will notice that we know the great broad features of the future, but next to nothing of its mere

detail. MORTALITY—DESTINY—THE FUTURE MORAL STATE OF THE WORLD;—but the detail, *nothing!*

Still this ignorance of detail ought not to interfere with our right apprehension and proper use of the future.

. We do not know what a day will bring forth, yet our schemes are planned according to the probabilities of *years!*

Now give this a religious application.

The fact of our ignorance of the future should have a deeply religious effect upon us:—

DEPENDENCE.
EARNESTNESS (*brief!*).

God's administration of this one department of His government, viz., all that is involved in our relations to the future, fills me with adoring wonder—so *much*, yet so *little!*—so *clear*, yet so *dim!*—so *certain*, yet so *doubtful!*

I will hide myself in the Everlasting, and then the future will come upon me without fear or burdensomeness; even to-day I shall be master of to-morrow, and death itself shall be but a flickering shadow on the sunny way that leads up to heavenly places. I would live as one who is called to immortality in Christ Jesus, and for whom all the future has been graciously arranged. I am no longer at the mercy of accident, casuality, or misfortune; my King, my Redeemer, He whom my soul trusteth, has gone on before to prepare place and time for me, so I will arise and speed after Him with burning and thankful love, knowing that how devious soever the way, and how

bleak and cross-cutting soever the wind, there is sweet home at the end, the gladness of which shall throw into oblivion all hardship and weariness. I do not ask to know the mere detail of the future. I know enough of time unborn, to say unto the righteous it shall be well with him; to say to the penitent at the Cross, that he shall share the Lord's paradise; to say to them who mourn, the days of your tears shall be ended, and the time of your joy shall be as a sea whose shore no man can find! Is it dark with thee, my friend? It has been quite as dark with myself, and yet I have seen light descending on the rugged hills and making those hills as steps up to heaven. Art thou afraid of the coming days, lest they bring with them edged weapons, pain, grief, loss, friendlessness, and desolation? Put thy hand into the palm wounded for thee, the palm of the One Infinite Saviour. He knows all—He is the treasurer of the future—the great dragon is tamed by the anger of His eye—and they who trust Him with all their love, shall be set amidst the safety, the peace, and the glory of His eternal Zion.

Solomon:

THE WONDERFUL VARIETY OF HIS CHARACTER.

'*And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.*" —1 KINGS iii. 3.

LOOKING at this text, the question which presses upon me is, Which of these two characteristics will get the upper hand in the long run?

It would seem as if the *first* would, it is so distinctly and fervently described, and the other is barely referred to at all; and indeed it is a very, very small inclination towards heathenism—the faintest possible inclination, and almost excusable, for "the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord." Still, there it is; and I want to trace it that we may see what will become of it in the long run. Will he outgrow this defect? Will he get quite away from this class? Is it the *morning* twilight growing towards splendour, or the *evening* twilight deepening into total darkness?

Let us see how well Solomon begins. Take his notion of a *king* (vers. 7-9): (*a*) God's servant. (*b*) Discrimination of moral qualities. (*c*) Good of the people.

Now such a man as this *must* go in an upward direction!

So he does: see his wisdom (women and child) ver. 28.

So he grows until there is none like him! (iv. 34.)

Nobler things still will Solomon do; yea, he will build a house for God!

So the narrative rolls on. Never was man so wise, so good, so rich, so great, as Solomon. Splendour is added to splendour, until the whole firmament burns with glory. Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman and Chalcol, and Darda, men of unusual wisdom and peculiar fame, were not to be named with Solomon: his genius gave language to the cedar, and made the voice of the hyssop to be heard in song; as for his proverbs, they were an army for multitude, and his songs were 1005. The king's throne was of ivory, and twelve lions stood upon its steps; and the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars were as abundant as sycamore trees. And so human nature seemed to be glorified in King Solomon!

Oh, would to God the gate of heaven would open for him *now*, and let him in!

It has been so with *ourselves* sometimes. *Now*, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace!

From what great heights may men fall. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning!

Take another extract from the life of Solomon. "When he was old Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites."

A picture of a man who has grown in the wrong direction! Backwards—downwards! A bright morning ending in a stormy night.

What are these snowy leaves which strew the ground? Perished buds and blossoms of holy character.

1. Need of *continual* watchfulness.
2. Insufficiency of *great* occasions, and special efforts, etc. (Solomon built an high place for Chemosh and Moloch.)
3. The impossibility of serving two masters.

The question for the best of us is, Which shall triumph, the good or the bad?

Good young man—(1) but rather fond of excitement; (2) but rather self-sufficient; (3) but rather *close*.

Which side shall triumph?

Prescribed Religion.

"They did eat the passover otherwise than it was written."—2 CHRON. XXX. 18.

SOON after the house of the Lord was cleansed Hezekiah sent to all Israel and all Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, to come to Jerusalem to keep the passover. It appears that for a very long time this had not been done by the people in a body. What had been done was very partial and limited,—very far, indeed, from being upon a national or universal scale; but now it was proposed that the people should come from every corner of the land, "from Beersheba even unto Dan," and although many laughed the posts to scorn in the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulon, "nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulon humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." The congregation was vast in extent. Whether owing to the largeness of the number, to the pressure and excitement of the occasion, or to other circumstances, many of the people did not pass through the prescribed course of preparation, but "did eat the passover otherwise than it was written." Technicality, routine, prescription, ceremonial, and ritual, were disregarded or

unobserved, but the great act was accomplished, the act of eating the passover. And the good king prayed for those of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulon, who had thus eaten, saying, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." The end was reached, but there was irregularity in the process: the passover was eaten, but the introductory ritual was unobserved; and the event happily shows that the less must always give way to the greater, and that the healing of the Lord is not limited by that which is incidental and temporary, for "the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people." This explanation will show you what our subject is, and point out the line along which our thoughts are to move.

For Jewish festivals think of Christian ordinances, and apply the principle of the text to their observance. Take the two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism by water will save no man; neither will eating and drinking the symbolical elements at the Lord's Table. The vital baptism is the baptism of the Holy Ghost; the saving act is eating and drinking the body and the blood of Jesus Christ by faith. Far be it from me to deny that a man cannot have the spiritual because he has not had the material baptism, or that a man cannot have partaken spiritually and savingly of Jesus Christ because he has never attended what is known as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At the same time, I should distinctly teach that those who have had the opportunity of fulfilling such ordinances, and have neglected to do so, need to be prayed

for as having omitted services which are full of spiritual meaning and privilege.

It is, of course, easy to raise the contention that ordinances are only symbolical and figurative, and that the main thing is to realize the fact which is signified. That is perfectly true. But the prior question is, Are these ordinances appointed in Holy Scripture? If so, nothing but extreme necessity can justify their modification or suspension. David was an hungered, ate the shewbread, and the disciples under the same circumstances, etc.

Herein is the graciousness of God, that exceptions are allowed and provided for, etc.

Apply this same thought to church attendance, etc.

To church membership, etc.

To various *methods of thinking.*

Hadad:

THE PRESSURE OF DESTINY.

"*Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise.*"—1 KINGS xi. 22.

DAVID, and Joab the captain of the host of Israel, wrought great desolation in Edom; "for six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom." Amongst those who escaped was a little child, comparatively speaking, an infant member of the royal house. He was so little that he could not have made his escape alone, but he was taken care of by certain Edomites of his father's servants, and in their company he fled into Egypt. Pharaoh was very kind to his royal exile. "He gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land." With growing years he came into growing favour, and by-and-by he married the sister of the queen of Egypt. It would seem, then, that he did well to escape from his own ill-treated country, and to put himself under the protection of the mighty and gracious Pharaoh. It came to pass, however, that Hadad (that is the name of the Edomite) said to Pharaoh, "I want to go home; let me depart, that I may go to mine own country." Pharaoh was astounded by the inquiry,

and began to wonder whether Hadad had been unkindly treated in Egypt, and in the frankest manner he said, "What hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country?" A very proper question; to which Hadad appears to have returned an ungrateful and insufficient answer—"Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise." Here, then, is a man who has all that position and wealth and security can give him, and yet he pines for a land far away, where he has seen nothing but cruelty and shame. It would seem that he did not know when he was well off, and that he deserved whatever reprisals were in store for him. We do often come to rough conclusions about men and things, because we have not the key to the secret. A study of this romantic incident may not altogether cleanse us of our folly, but it should do two or three things for us which are of great importance. We shall see this the moment we know the secret of Hadad's wish to leave the land of his adoption and his honour. You will find the secret in the fourteenth verse of the chapter:—"And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom." It was a Divine stirring! It was a restlessness sent from God! It was a hunger created in the heart! *It was the first look of Destiny upon the young soul.*

1. Men cannot always give an account of their impulses. We seem to have everything, yet we want something else. What that something else is, we perhaps seldom know, or if we do know, we cannot put the want into words. We have all Egypt, yet we are willing to leave it for Edom.

(Recall the case of Eliab and David, and David's answer, "Is there not a cause?")

2. What we mistake, either in ourselves or in others, for mere *restlessness* may be the pressure of *destiny*. We blame some men roughly for desiring a change, and when we question the men themselves as to their reason, they tells us that they have been treated well, even handsomely, yet they want to go! Then we condemn them as unreasonable, and we predict many a judgment for them! Alas, how ignorant we are, and how cruel to one another! (Recall the case of Eli and Samuel. At *last* the priest perceived that the Lord had spoken to the child! How often that is the very *last* thought that occurs!)

3. We may judge of the value of our impulses by the *self-denial* imposed by their operation. Consider what Hadad had to lose! The king was his brother-in-law: Egypt supplied with the utmost liberalness his every want: his son Genubath was treated as the sons of Pharaoh: no wish was left ungratified: yet he said, "Let me go in anywise." This law of judgment will disenchant many of our supposed Divine impulses. "Except a man deny himself and take up his cross daily," he cannot be moving in the Divine direction. Remember in the cases quoted David was impelled to *war*, and Samuel to make revelations which must have cost his heart no small strain. Are our impulses towards self-enjoyment?

4. Is it not by some such impulse that the good man meets *death* with a brave heart? How else could he leave loved ones, home, manifold enjoyment, and social honour?

Yet he pines for heaven. "I have a desire to depart." "Oh that I had wings like a dove."

> "To thee, O dear, dear country,
> Mine eyes their vigils keep."

God surely sends this home-sickness into our hearts when He is about to call us up higher.

A mighty and wonderful thing, truly, is this stirring of the Divine purpose in the soul. It is a "song without words," a sounding far beyond the measurement of any language. Let us rest quietly where we are until there comes suddenly from heaven a rushing mighty wind. "Abide in your lot until the end of the days."

5. Remember how possible it is to overrule our best impulses. Pharaoh said stop, Hadad begged to be allowed to go. Peter said, "That be far from thee, Lord," but Christ called him an offence, and drove him behind. "Grieve not the Spirit." "Quench not the Spirit." Is not the Spirit of Christ urging every man to leave the Egypt of sinful bondage? "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

Sudden Revelations.

"*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*"—REV. i. 17.

PHILIP said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The infinite impertinence of this suggestion will be seen when it is remembered that it proceeds on the assumption that man's vision is quite equal to any revelation which it is possible for God to make of Himself. Philip did not say, "Lord, prepare our vision, and then make us glad with a higher revelation than we have ever seen;" he took it for granted that the vision was perfectly ready; that there was nothing wanting on the human side; that the only defect was on the side of God: as if he had said, "I am ready; why, then, does the Father hesitate to show Himself?"

It did not occur to Philip that he really was not ready; he did not think that any special readiness was required; it did not occur to him that his eye could ever be dazzled or destroyed by splendours yet unseen. I want to show that this is, or easily may be, our own case; that Philip not only expressed the supreme *desire* of mankind, "Show us the Father," but that he committed the supreme *mistake* of mankind in supposing that man could endure the sudden and perfect revelation of God. Moses said, "Show

me thy glory," but the Lord answered, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live." Isaiah caught a glimpse of the King, and exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone." Job said, "Now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When in the transfiguration the disciples saw Christ's face shine as the sun, and His raiment become white and glistening, "they fell on their face and were sore afraid." Philip, then, not only expressed the supreme *desire*, but repeated the supreme *mistake* of mankind. We think ourselves ready for *any* revelation, whereas the fact is that our capacity for receiving revelation is distinctly limited, and in this matter, as in every other, we are straitened in ourselves and not in God, and partial revelation is explained by the fact that God adapts the light to the vision which has to receive it.

1. This is open to illustration from the common events of human life :—

(*a*) Doctor's report of child's health.

(*b*) A view of the next seven years' trials, etc.

(*c*) We value a friend for his *discretion* in such matters.

And yet *you*, who cannot bear these revelations, ask to be shown the Infinite God! A child who cannot bear the twinkle of a candle, demands to look upon the noonday sun!

2. This is *gracious* on the part of God. Child: all the books he has to learn, at once!

See how many different languages he has to learn with-

out ever going beyond English! Every new department has a language of its own. If he could hear them all at once, he would enter Babel at a step!

Observe: If we could see the last from the first, it would make us impatient of all that lay between. Mark the unhappy effects of such impatience:—

Imperfect knowledge;

Restless temper;

Immature conclusions.

A great part of the advantage is in the actual *growing*. We want breadth as well as height (say in an *oak*):—

The *day* dawns;

The *year* develops;

The *harvest* comes little by little.

We are, then, in the *line* of the Divine movement in receiving revelation by degrees. This is the law. This is God's way.

3. Any unwillingness to submit to this method of revelation is proof of an unsound and presumptuous mind.

It would be accounted so in the *family*, in *business*, in *statesmanship*.

In all things it is well to serve an *apprenticeship*.

The prodigal had his property *too soon*, and squandered it.

Let us know that life is a continual revelation. We cannot see over the wall that separates to-morrow from to-day. But Christ says, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." We are revealed to *ourselves* little by little. We can do things to-day which we could not have done

twenty years ago. We have riper minds, steadier vision, calmer judgment. We can now condemn our own early imprudences, and speak with proper harshness of our impatience and audacity. Little by little, then! Another hint, another gleam, and so let knowledge come to us even as the sun shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

John could recline on Christ's breast, yet was dazzled and overpowered by the suddenly revealed glory of his Lord. There is a familiar side of Christ, and a side unfamiliar. Some mountains are accessible on one side only.

Tried Weapons.

"*And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is none other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.*"—1 SAMUEL xxi. 9.

THE world is old enough now to have laid by in store weapons upon whose quality and strength it can pronounce with the emphasis of experience. What occasion is there for us to try new-fangled instruments of fantastic shape and unproven temper? Is there on old steel? Are there no historical swords? Are we left altogether without the spell of rousing memories? Are there yet amongst us swords whose touch is an inspiration, because they connect us with the heroisms and victories of other days? It appears from the context that David was flying from the face of Saul, that he came in his course to Nob to Ahimelech the priest, and made a statement of his case more or less correct. At the conclusion of the interview, David told the priest that he had no sword, and asked him for his assistance under these destitute circumstances. "And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if thou wilt take

that, take it: for there is none other save that here." All the weapons of the enemy will one day fall into the hands of the Church, and great will be the slaughter in the name of the Lord! Goliath never dreamt of the destiny of his sword. It was Philistinian property, intended for Philistinian purposes, and lo! it was wrenched from his hand, and reddened with his own blood! It is so with all evil. It is always preparing a weapon for its own destruction, and twisting a rope for its own neck.

What a companion and friend would this sword be to David! How it would link him with events gone far away! How he would speak in pathetic soliloquy as he looked upon that sword! Would not old stains come upon it and say to him, "All that do wrong shall be put down, and every foul tyranny shall be slain and hidden in the dust, where no man can find it any more"? Would he not think of the call of Samuel, and of the anointing oil, and of the secret with which he had been entrusted; and as he regarded the sword that was in his hand, would not his soul feel the inspiration of a new impulse, would not his lips be opened in a new and tender prayer at the throne of the heavenly grace? It is even so with ourselves. We have old books in our libraries, the very touch of which makes us young again; we have passages marked in books, the very marking of which causes us to forget the years that have taken away aught of our strength, and rouses us to do, with the old prowess, the old and beautiful deeds. Blessed are they who are rich in memories! who can commune with old milestones on the road, and old stiles where they have lingered, and old trysting-places, and

yellow old memories that have the keeping of life within their grasp! Are we living so as to lay up such memories? Or is our life just a superficial scramble, leaving behind us no footprints, no wayside marks, and never enriching our hearts with one recollection that can destroy time and make us young, as if we could draw upon eternity? How ignoble a thing for Goliath to have been slain with his own sword! To have the weapon wrenched out of one's own hand, and thrust into one's own heart! Well might the eagle, on the poet's page, be made to mourn that out of its own breast had been taken the feather which caused the arrow to fly with a deadlier speed to drink the blood of its heart! It is always so. Whoever is doing wrong will be slain with his own sword; whoever is building upon false foundations will be "hoisted with his own petard." You know the case of the minister who, speaking to his friends, in tones too solemn to be other than artificial and untrue, said to them, "Do not read Shakespeare; it is a waste of time to read the pages of such a writer; read other and better literature; else what an account will you be called upon to give when you go to that 'bourne from which no traveller returns'?" Goliath slain with his own sword; and the minister quoting in the pulpit the very author against whose writings he was cautioning the young geniuses that waited upon his ministry!

I propose to treat this text with special reference to the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and to contend that in all the conflicts of life there is none like it for routing the foe, and adding victories to truth. "The

word of the Lord is quick and powerful; sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow; and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

I shall regard the Bible as more than one weapon. It is a *complete armoury*, as we have just read in the sixth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. You yourselves in these latter days have seen some curious specimens of cutlery. You have seen the boy with that wonderful thing in his hand of which he is so proud. He says, "That is the great blade for cutting wood and leather and hard substances; and this is a little blade for making pens and cutting pencils; and this is a lancet blade, and this is a bodkin, and this is a piercer of another kind, and this is a screw." And so he turns them all out under one haft. It is even so with this better haft. I can turn all sorts of blades out of it in every possible direction, and hold it up like a complete armoury. I propose to do so this morning, and to ask you to say whether in all the equipments of life there is aught to be compared to the sword of the Lord.

There is none like it for *variety of adaptation*. I find in the Word of God weapons that I can turn in every direction; weapons that suit every mood of my own spirit, and every combination of circumstances by which I am surrounded. I need not go out of the book for a single answer. Whatsoever may be the peculiar gift of my mind or tongue, I find in the Word of God—without consulting any other author—the precise answer to every difficulty, the right method of meeting every opposition, and the one true solace that can get into the heart and heal it with the

succour which it needs. Do I believe, as I thoroughly do, that sometimes it is needful to meet spiritual and intellectual opposition by the blade of irony? Behold, I have a blade in this book; for did not Elijah taunt the priests and worshippers of Baal saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god!" And may I not, following his example, mock, in many cases, those who with impotent rage are seeking to summon another god than the Jehovah of the universe to take the supreme seat in creation? Yet there are some people who do not understand what irony is. I saw a marvellous illustration of this not many days ago. Some mischievous person sent me a paper which ought never to have been published, and in that miscalled "Christian" newspaper there was an article marked for my edification. Not knowing but that a friend's hand might have marked it, I looked at the article. It was a caution against inviting Henry Ward Beecher to preach in London upon some important occasion. And the reason given for not inviting that immortal preacher was this, that Mr. Beecher had said, "When the pilgrim fathers went to the Western World, they took with them *several European prejudices, amongst the rest a belief in the evil one;*" "but," Mr. Beecher added, "*we, in New York, have found out that there is no devil.*" The demented editor quoted these words as if they had been seriously spoken, and appealed to British Christianity whether a man who could so express himself ought to be invited to preach a missionary sermon. Oh the thick-headedness of some men, the impenetrability of some hearts! If ever there was a fine touch of irony in the speech of any man, it was in the tone of Henry

Ward Beecher when he said, "We, in *New York*, have found out that there is no devil." How are we to get through this world, if people are sitting and hearing us in this way,—turning our sentences upside down; mistaking irony for seriousness, and not having the dimmest notion that we are ridiculing the men who profess not to believe in the existence of a foe? Let that writer write another article as soon as he can against Elijah, wherever that spirit may now be wandering—to warn all good intelligences not to open the door of hospitality to him or invite him to a moment's conversation, because once he said, on the summit of Carmel, that Baal was a god!

As for argument, where can I find a blade more keenly argumentative? I engage to find in the Holy Scriptures specimens of the keenest, most lucid, and persistent reasoning that can be found within the bounds of all literature. And as for casuistry, cases of conscience which cannot be settled,—the sword of the Lord is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder, getting into the most critical parts of our life, searching out the intents and purposes of the soul,—not dealing with broad, general statements only, but dealing with the most subtle, recondite, difficult conditions and experiences of the heart. No man need have any difficulty in piercing any casuistical question to its very marrow if he will only avail himself of the services of the sword of the Spirit. Then, if aught might be needed to ward off those who would give sorrow to the soul, enemies that would plague the heart with much difficulty, infuse into our troubled life much grief,—there is no blade that can reach so far, and strike so keenly, and defend so com-

pletely, as the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God!

I would impress my young hearers with the *comprehensiveness* of the Bible; with its *universality of adaptation* to all the circumstances and necessities of human life. You may accuse me of boldness for making this statement, yet make it I must; for I fear a good many young people and others are going elsewhere for defence, instead of going into the sanctuary of the Lord, where the weapons of heaven are provided in rich and exquisite profusion. I find many men going to hard books, to elaborate treatises, to severe arguments, conducted by uninspired genius, in the expectation of finding there the answer to some particular difficulty. No, men write to me again and again, and say, "What books can you recommend to meet certain classes of objections?" I say, I recommend the Word of God as the best answer to every objection that can be brought against it. Let the Word of the Lord be the defence of the Lord. Let the Lord's own Word be the answer to the suggestion of every devil and the seductiveness of every tempter. I find in the Book of God all I need. I recommend those who are going elsewhere for weapons with which to fight the battles of life, to turn back to the old armour set in order by the hand of the Living One Himself!

There is none like it for *ease of carriage*. There are weapons that are very difficult to carry, but the sword of the Lord is not one of them. There are weapons of war very intricately constructed, and very difficult of management, very cumbrous, and altogether oppressive; but the

sword of the Lord does not belong to that class. Consider how little a book the Bible is, and regard that circumstance as one of the finest proofs of its presumptive inspiration and adaptation to the wants of man. Given the Encyclopædia Britannica as a work of inspiration for the guidance of men—and who could have read it? Who could have got through its mile on mile of lettered stationery? Who could have comprehended its genius and its scope? Instead of the Word of God being the largest book in the library, it is, in some respects, the smallest. "The kingdom of heaven is as a grain of mustard seed;" "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal." The Word of the Lord is short as to extent, is compassable to magnitude. Yet, who can exhaust it? It is like some of our own monosyllables, pronounceable by the infantile tongue, inexhaustible by the most stupendous intellect. I will give you one word of the kind which is signified,—the word *Love!* A little child can say the word love, but is there an angel in heaven that has touched the shore of that sea? So the Word of the Lord is a little book—a sword easily carried, very manageable indeed as to size; and yet, who can exhaust it? You can carry the Word of the Lord in one hand; you can carry it in your smallest pocket, you can read it through from end to end, and keep the memory and all the intellectual and spiritual faculties in concentrated attention while you pass through the exercise. Have you ever tried this? Are we not in danger, if I may so say, of snapping off little pieces of the sword and mistaking them for the whole weapon? Are we not in

danger of taking the mere filings of the steel, and complaining that the sword is without strength or edge? Take it as a whole; abide by it in its entirety; strike with the whole force of it. It is possible to do this, not in the letter, but in the spirit; and when a man wields the whole weapon, he never strikes but to kill the foe; he never puts out his hand but in omnipotent and complete defence.

There is none like it *for universality of use. Children* can use it; *sick people* can use it; the *poorest man* can avail himself of it; the *busiest man* may find a moment for its exercise. Am I wrong in mourning any degree of disposition to take away the sword of the Spirit from the use of children? I should never exclude, directly or indirectly, by the law of the land, the Bible from the common schools of Britain. I would exclude the priest and the minister, and the dogmatic teacher, and the sectarian zealot, but never would I consent to have the Bible excluded from our common schools by the law of the land. Let the Bible be there. Thomas Guthrie, whose Life has just appeared, tells us that as soon as the children could put letters and syllables together in the elementary schools in Scotland they were turned into the Book of Proverbs; and he traces a great deal of the sagacity and strength of the Scottish character to this early training in that richest of all ethical and philosophical books. Says he, "Think of a child being put down to read such sentences as 'Tom has a dog,' 'The cat is here,' when he might be reading such words as 'God is love,' 'Train up a child in the way he should go'!" Do not take the Bible away from children, but do not make a *task book* of it. Do not gather around the memories of

childhood any evil recollections regarding your severity in compelling them to commit to memory the sacred Word. Make it the joy and privilege of their lives; show them how it is the richest of luxuries to be able to know what God has said, and to be able to quote God's wishes in God's own words.

I am not arguing as against those who have no veneration for the Bible. For there are many men who do not take my view of the Bible in the school who have as profound a reverence for the Word of God as I could possibly lay claim to. Still, there is this difference amongst us. I insist that *secularism* is denominationalism, and I insist that the Bible shall not be excluded from any common school, directly or indirectly, *by the law of the land.* I am told that the directors of the Bank of England, or some other commercial establishment, do not read the Bible when they meet. That is true. But is there anything *in the law of the land* to prevent their doing so? If they were found reading part of the Sermon on the Mount before raising their rate of interest, what law of the land would be able to pounce upon them? This is my point. I do not say, "You *shall* read the Bible, or you *must* read the Bible;" but I say, "You *may* read it if you please." If the Bible is a sectarian book, then the God of the Bible is a sectarian God, and the Christ of the Bible is a sectarian Christ!

The sick can use this sword of the Lord. It can be wielded in sighs, in broken expressions; it can be hinted at, it can be whispered; the weakest, frailest creature amongst us, just trembling on the edge of the grave, can use the sword of the Lord. And the poor man has a weapon

which he can use. He is not learned; he cannot speak the language of many who assail his Christian faith; but let him speak a word from the heart, steadfastly and reverently, and in the long run he will slay Goliath with his own weapon, and be more than conqueror through Him in whose Word his heart has believed. The busy man, too, can use this sword.

What sword must we have? It must be the sword of the Lord. There is none like that. It is one, it is simple, it is complete, it is sufficient; it has the testimony of ages written upon it. Who, then, amongst us, says that he will take the sword of the Lord and fight the battles of life with that? I call the dead in innumerable thousands and tens of thousands, to say with all the emphasis of infinitely varied experience, "There is none like it!" And they have tested many; they know one sword from another, the true steel from the false lead; and all history says in our hearing this day, "If you want a sword that can do execution, that has inspiration in its very touch, victory in its very steel, take the sword of the Lord, for there is none like it!"

You will need it, dear friends. I have need of it. We have not the answer in ourselves, it is put into us by the breath of the Spirit of the Lord. Life is a war, a fierce and terrible fight. Some of us seem to have no rest night or day; we are besieged by the enemy; we are well-nigh overwhelmed by the foe. What is our defence? The sword of the Living God! Give me the sword of the Lord and of Gideon—it smiteth down a host like one man, and cleaveth the bones of the mighty like straw; the helmet of

brass is as a covering of ivy before it, and the breastplate of iron as a flimsy gauze. Oh, dear, dear sword! The grand old veterans of other days have passed it on to us, and we, with added victories, ought to hand it on to generations yet to come. I speak in the fear of God, and in the sight of the great white throne, in saying that every day the Bible seems to be newer, deeper, richer, mightier than ever it did before. It is the sum of all literature, the consummation of all genius, a repository of consolation, a solace of healing and redemption for all the ills and woes and griefs of this poor life. Blessed are they who have hidden this word in their innermost hearts!

(*From Reporter's Notes.*)

Manoah's Wife.

"*But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.*"—JUDGES xiii. 23.

THIS is part of a family scene. It is quoted from a conversation which took place between husband and wife. I propose to treat the incident in a familiar manner, as showing us some aspects of family life, some methods of reading Divine Providence, and some sources of consolation amid the distractions and mysteries of the present world.

We shall look at it as showing some aspects of family life. Here is the head of the house in gloom. Is he not always more or less in gloom, this same head of the house all the world over? Who ever knew a head of the house that was not more or less low-spirited, worried by a hundred anxieties, tormented by sudden fear? Perhaps naturally so: after all he *is* the head of the house; and probably the lightning conductor, being higher than any other part of the building, may have experience of thunder-storms and lightning discharges that lower parts of the structure know nothing about. As the head of the house you are in the market-place, you see things in their roughest aspects,

you have to bear many a thing that you cannot explain to strangers, and there is an under-current in your consciousness which perhaps your truest friend has never seen, or seeing, appreciated; and therefore when I hear the head of the house complaining in tones that have no music in them, how know I but that the poor man has been undergoing vexations and distresses that he does not feel at liberty to explain? At any rate Manoah took this view of the angel's visit: "We have seen God: no man can see God and live—we shall surely die." Here we have a wife comforting her husband. Like a true woman, she let Manoah have his groan out. There is a beautiful cunning in love. It does not break in upon a sentence at a semi-colon. It lets the groan get right out, and then it offers its gentle consolation. If we had heard Manoah alone, we should have said, A terrible thunder-storm has burst upon this house, and God has come down upon it with awful vengeance; and not until we heard his wife's statement of the case should we have any clear idea of the reality of the circumstances. You complain of this word *but;* when a statement is made to you and it proceeds fluently and satisfactorily, the speaker says *but,* and you say, "Aye, there it is again." We sometimes abuse this *but;* it sometimes, however, introduces all the light and all the music, and is found to be the key, long lost, of the gate which had impeded our progress. But his wife said unto him—*but* a certain Samaritan came that way. Therefore remember that help sometimes comes after words that seem only to promise some greater distress. Be the complement of each other. The husband does not know all the case. Perhaps the wife would read

the case a little too hopefully. You must hear both the statements, put them both together, and draw your conclusions from the twofold statement. People are the complement of each other. Woe to that man who thinks he combines all populations and all personalities in himself. That must be a miserable man who thinks he is the only man in the world. You would get more help from other people if you expected more, if you invited more, if you put yourself in circumstances that would justify the offering of more. There is not a poor creature in the world who cannot fill up the drop that is wanting to complete the fulness of some other creature's joy. You would not be half the man that you are except for your wife, and yet you never say "Thank you" with any degree of heartiness or sincerity. You listen to her suggestions with a half contempt, as if she did not know what she was talking about, and then you go and work out her idea and get the profit of it, and say what a clever man of business you are. That is not honest, it is not just—"Thou shalt not steal."

Here we have a husband and wife talking over a difficult case. Is not that a rare thing in these days of rush and tumult and noise, when a man never sees his little children, his very little ones, except in bed? He leaves home so early in the morning, and gets back so late at night, that he never sees his little ones but in slumber. Is it not now a rare thing for a husband and wife to sit down and talk a difficulty over in all its bearings? Have I not known in the course of my pastoral experience a wife wronged because of the husband failing to show proper confidence? The man has been in difficulties, wherever he has gone he

has been pursued by a haunting dread, and he has suffered all this alone; whereas if he had but stated the case with all frankness and loving candour, who knows but that his wife might have said some word which might have been as a key to the lock, and as a solution of the hard and vexatious problem? You will always find it an inexpressible comfort to take your husband or wife, as the case may be, into your confidence, and talk any difficulty right through, keeping back no part of the case. "It soothes poor misery hearkening to her tale." If we lived in more domestic confidence, our houses would be homes, our homes would be churches, and those churches would be in the very vicinage of heaven.

Let us now look at the incident as showing some methods of reading Divine Providence. There we have the timid and distrustful method. Manoah looks at the case, reads it, spells where he cannot read plainly, and then, looking up from his book, he says to his wife, "There is bad news for you: God is about to destroy us." There are these same timid and doubtful readers of Providence in society to-day. There are some men who never see the sky in its mid-day beauty, who never see summer in July at all, who really have never one day's true elevation of soul. I do not blame such people altogether. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We cannot all read with equal facility, and see with equal distinctness. There are causes or sub-causes, intermediate secondary influences arising from physical constitution and other circumstances over which we have no control, which trouble our vision even of God Himself. I put in, therefore, a word wherever

I can for those who are not constituted hopefully, who have not been gifted with a sanguine temperament. There are men amongst us whose life is a continual pain. It is possible so to read God's ways among men as to bring upon ourselves great distress. Is a man, therefore, to exclaim, "This is a punishment sent from heaven for some inscrutable reason, and I must endure it as well as I can; I shall never see the sky when not a cloud bedims its dome"? No, you are to struggle against this, you are to believe other people; that is to say, you are to live in other people's lives, to get out of other people the piece that is wanting in your life. You are not to put ashes upon your head and say, "There is nothing in the universe that I do not see." You are to call little children and to say, "What do you see?" and young men and say, "How does life look from your point of view?" and you are to live in other people. We are to walk by faith and not by sight; we are debtors both to the Jew and to the Greek; and we must get from one another a complete statement of the reality of God's way among the children of men. This is the inductive and hopeful method of reading Divine Providence. Some cynical people who have no licence, and therefore ought to be arrested as metaphysical felons, say that women have no logic. And that sentence sounds as if really it ought to be true. It is so pat. It is one of those little weapons that a man can pick up and use as if he had always had it. I think that Manoah's wife was in very deed learned in what we call the inductive method of reasoning, for she stated her case with wonderful simplicity and clearness. "If the Lord

were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." That is logic! That is the inductive method!—the method, namely, of putting things together and drawing a conclusion from the aggregate. Thank God if you have a wife who can talk like that. Why, if they had both been gloomy parties, what a house it would have been! They need never have taken the shutters down, and summer might have ignored their existence. But Manoah's wife was of a hopeful turn of mind. She had the eye which sees flecks of blue in the darkest skies. She had the ear which hears the softest goings of the Eternal. She was an interpreter of the Divine thought. Oh, to have such an interpreter in every house, to have such an interpreter in every pulpit in England, to have such a companion on the highway of venture and enterprise! This is the eye that sees further than the dull eye of criticism can ever see, that sees God's heart, that reads meanings that seem to be written afar. Have we this method of reading Divine Providence? I call it the appreciative and thankful method. Why, some of us can take up our loaf and say, "Only this!" and say it in a tone that means practical blasphemy; others can take up a crust and say, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow! This is God's gift. He cannot mean me to die, or He would not have put this into my hand." A litany in one sentence, worthy to find its place amid the hallelujahs an d blessings of the better world. Who was it that said, "When I look at those who are higher than I

am, I am tempted towards discontent, but when I go out amongst the poor and compare their condition with my own, my heart overflows with loving thankfulness"? How dare we complain, the worst, the poorest in this house! Taking the average of us—and a low average—what man, what woman is there here that ought not to join in heart-felt praise to Almighty God for mercies innumerable as the moments, delicate as the light, present as the living air round about one's poor life! Manoah droops, pines, dies; his wife goes out, gathers the flowers in the Lord's garden, brings them back to him and says, "Manoah, be a man; would God have given us these things if He meant to kill us?" And poor Manoah lifts up his drooping face to the light. Put together your mercies, look at them as a whole and say, Can this mean death, or does it mean life? and I know what the glad answer will be.

There are some sources of consolation amid the distractions and mysteries of the present world. Every life has some blessings. I charge it upon you at this season of the year to reckon up your blessings. Men eagerly count up their misfortunes and trials, but how few remember their mercies! One man says, I have no wealth. No, but look what a pair of shoulders you have! Another man says, I have but feeble health. True, but look what investments you have! Another voice says, I am disposed to be fearful and dispirited. But look what a wife you have! Every life has some blessing, and we must find what that blessing or those blessings are. We must put them together, and reason from the goodness towards the glory of God. Amid these blessings religious privileges

are sure signs of the Divine favour. We have religious privileges: we can go into the sanctuary; we can take counsel together; we can kneel side by side in prayer; we can go to the very best sources for religious instruction and religious comfort. Does God mean to kill when He has given us such proofs of favour as these? Does He mean to kill us when He has sent the minister of the covenant to tell us glad tidings of great joy? Let us find in religious blessings proof that God means no evil to us. We will persist in looking at a distress till it seems to be the only thing in our life. We need to put two and two together. Do not be losing yourselves in the midst of details that have apparently no connection. Gather up your life until it becomes shaped into meaning, and then when you have seen things in their proper relationships pronounce calmly upon the ways of God towards you. Let us put away religious melancholy. Many people have come to me saying, "I fear I have committed the unpardonable sin; I seem to have offended God for ever, and put Him far away from me, so that I can never see His face again." Wouldst thou have any anxiety about the thing if He were clean gone for ever, and had drawn the skirts of His garments after Him so as to leave thee but the blackness of darkness? By the very fact of thy concern understand that God has not purposed to kill thee. Cry mightily for Him; say, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" "Why standest Thou afar off, O God?" And if thou criest so, He will surely come again, saying, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, that with everlasting mercy I might gather thee."

Let us learn from this family scene that great joys often succeed great fears. Manoah said, The Lord intends to kill us; his wife said, Not so, or He would not have received a burnt offering at our hands. And behold Samson was born, a judge of Israel, an avenger of mighty wrongs. Is it ever so dark as just before the dawn? Are you not witnesses that a great darkness always precedes a great light—that some peculiar misery comes to prepare the way for some unusual joy? If we could only lay hold of life in this way, and read it, not with unreasonable expectation of deliverance and joy, but with hopefulness, we should never become old, desiccated, or tuneless—to the last we should wear like old silver, to the very last there would be in us a light above the brightness of the sun. Let us read the goodness of God in others. Many a time I have been recovered from practical atheism by reading other people's experience. When things seem to have been going wrong with myself, I have looked over into my neighbour's garden and seen his flowers, and my heart has been cheered by the vision.

Oh, woman, talk of your mission! Here is your mission described and exemplified in the case of the wife of Manoah. What do you want with your School Board and platform experiences, and those mysterious abstractions which you call your *rights?* Here is your field of operation. Cheer those who are dispirited; read the Word of God in its spirit to those who can only read its cold meagre letter, and the strongest of us will bless you for your gentle ministry. Did not Paul write to the Church at Rome saying, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila," putting the wife's

name first, and that in no mere spirit of courtesy, but probably in recognition of her supreme influence in spiritual direction and consolation? Who was it in the days of Scottish persecution? Was it not Helen Stirk—a braver Helen than the fiend Macgregor—who said to her husband as they were carried forth both to be executed, "Husband, rejoice, for we have lived together many joyful days; but this day wherein we die together ought to be most joyful to us both, because we must have joy for ever; therefore I will not bid you good night, for we shall suddenly meet within the kingdom of heaven"? Who was it when Whitefield was mobbed and threatened, and when even he was about to give way,—who was it but his wife who took hold of his robe and said, "George, play the man for your God"? Oh, woman, talk of your rights, and your sphere, and your having nothing to do! We should die without you. The man is fit for murders, stratagems, and spoils who is not a worshipper of woman—a worshipper of his mother, of his sister, of his wife, of the ideal woman. Have a sphere of labour at home, go into sick chambers and speak as only a woman can speak. Counsel your sons as if you were not dictating to them. Read Providence to your husband in an incidental manner, as if you were not reproaching him for his dulness, but simply hinting that you had seen unexpected light. Women have always said the finest things that have ever been said in the Bible. Why it was a woman that—I speak it with reverence—outwitted the Lord Himself. He said "No" to her request. And He was not accustomed to say that word, it fell awkwardly from His dear lips. "I am not sent but unto

the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." But the woman outwitted Him! There was not a Scribe or Pharisee who would not have been silenced, but she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." And He instantly yielded Himself as a willing prisoner of love. The finest things that have ever been spoken have been spoken from the heart. The brain may write down its list, and a very fine list too, but very cold, and I will undertake to write sentences from the heart which for wit, sparkle, richness, and divinity, will cause the brain to double up its list and slink off.

(*Printed from Reporter's notes.*)

Jonathan's Moral Courage.

"*So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month; for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.*"—1 SAMUEL xx. 34.

WE are to understand that David was in great jeopardy from Saul, the king of Israel. David himself was very sensible of the peril of his condition; so much so, that he graphically described it to Jonathan in these words—"As my soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death!" David was anxious to know whether Saul was at all mollified towards him. So the two young men, Jonathan and David, made a little plan between them, by which they were to test the present condition of the king's mind. The dinner was provided as usual; Saul took his accustomed seat; but David was not present. But Saul had self-control enough that day to say nothing about the absence of David. The next day things were established in their usual order, and still David was not present. Saul now lost self-control so far as to ask Jonathan why David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, was not in his place? Jonathan, according to a pre-arranged scheme, made reply. Saul then lost self-control, took up a javelin, and hurled it at Jonathan; and Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, for he was grieved for David, because

his father had done him shame! I propose to enquire into the moral meaning of this incident; to see whether there is anything in it that applies to our own circumstances. I think it impossible to read this story without having the mind arrested at several points of unusual interest.

First of all, here is the *saddest of all sights* — man arrayed against man. Not man against a savage beast; but man against his own kind, smiting the face of one made in his own image and likeness; thirsting, as it were, for human blood! Is there any sight sadder than that? It is, too, the king himself arrayed against those who are under him. It is no mean man. It is a man with a great name; and if great names should signalise great natures, it was the greatest man in the kingdom that was arrayed against a youth comparatively friendless. This is the state of society to-day. We are, as amongst ourselves, our own worst enemies. There is no fight between dogs that is comparable to the controversy between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, employer and employed. There are no wolves in the forest that can tear one another so terribly as men can tear one another by unkind words, by unjust dealings, by taking sudden and unexpected advantage one of another. When God looks down from heaven to see the condition of His family upon earth, is there anything that can grieve His heart with so keen a pang as to see one man the enemy of another? Are we not mutual enemies? Is there not an eternal feud between man and man? I know you will stop me by

pointing out some accidental circumstances, which are apparently pointing in another direction. I am as well aware as you are of the accidents to which you refer. But, given a state of society in which limits and restrictions are taken away such as now bind us to what is at all events apparently right, is there not in our *hearts* the very spirit of homicide? I know this is not a popular doctrine to preach; but yet I want to enquire whether it is not *true.* We are watching one another just now; we are to some extent upon our good behaviour; we live upon an island that is guarded and defended by a thousand limitations; but still, take off all these artificial limitations, leave us to ourselves as ourselves, and is it not the part of man to devour man? That part was played so consistently, and so urgently, that the Apostle Paul actually feared that it would get into the Church itself; and therefore he said, "See that ye bite not, nor devour one another!" He was actually afraid that the Church would be turned into a menagerie, and that the menagerie would have no iron bars around it, so that man would develop his fiercer disposition, and bite and devour and slay his fellow-men! I sigh for the spirit of brotherhood; I pray for the good time when man shall see in man the image and likeness of God! When human nature is more highly valued, the spirit of Christ will prove to be more thoroughly established within us. Find a man that cares nothing for humanity, and you find a man who will never "go away into life eternal." Find a man who will divide the last crust with a fellow pilgrim, and you find one

whom Christ shall call into the prepared kingdom, and start on the line of immortality!

Here we have not only the saddest of all sights, but we have the *rupture of the most sacred bonds.* Who is it that is offended in this case? It is not a stranger; it is the *son* that rose in fierce anger, being grieved for David and ashamed of his own father. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Here is the natural order of things inverted! What is the natural order of things? That the young shall look up to the old; that the old should be the inspiration and the defence of the young; that the father should be as God to the child, and that the child should look up with reverence and veneration to the father. Here is a son getting up from his own father's table in shame and grief! To such passes may we come. Can you point to anything more pathetic, anything more fully charged with the highest elements of tragedy than this—that a son should get up in the presence of a great number of people ashamed of his own father! How are you bringing up your children? You cannot leave them great fortunes, but you may leave them good examples; you cannot leave them an illustrious name, but you may leave them a name that they can pronounce in every company, and defy the world to impeach. Your sons are taking notice of you. For a son to rise from his own father's table, to go out of the house ashamed of his own father, is a possibility of which all men, heads of houses, ought to be fully aware. Are there not to-day fathers of whom children are ashamed? Drunken fathers, indolent fathers,

extravagant, thoughtless, imperious, self-willed fathers,—the head of the house its only human curse! The man that ought to be "guide, philosopher, and friend," either the terror of his household or the shame of his progeny! When fathers occupy their right positions, sons, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will be likely to occupy theirs. A good example is never lost. For a time it may seem to have no good effect; but the period will come, in living out this troubled human life of ours, when the boy will remember whose son he is; when the spirit of traditional piety may seize him; when he will remember whose mantle it is that has fallen upon his shoulders. Oh! to have a name left that you can pronounce without fear or shame, that you can defend with both hands, is surely to have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away! When your son is ashamed of you, know that the time of your destruction draweth nigh!

Here, too, is *the assertion of the highest instinct.* What is it that asserts itself in this case? *It is the spirit of right.* "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." There is a time in our life when we must put aside all parental authority, traditional authority, ecclesiastical authority, parliamentary authority, and do the *right,* as Jonathan did when he arose on this occasion. What was it that stirred him to this deed? His father had done wrong, and he himself was determined to vindicate right. The voice of right ought to be heard through all the noise and tumult and distraction incident to human society. Have you had any experience of this kind? Oh, how it shakes a man! I know of no

finer sight than to see the spirit of rectitude filling out a man's nature; making his very weakness strength; giving a strange penetrating emphasis to a voice naturally weak; giving fire to the youth whom we thought incapable of vehemence: the sight is grand, beyond all the imaginings of poetry and dreams! These are the men that keep the world square. Men that get up from dinner tables and say, "No! I am ashamed of your evil doing; and I will not taste your bread!" We, poor hounds, tarry at the trough and satisfy our appetites, and slake our thirst, but *the man that is going out will save the world!* Now and then it does us good, it heightens us with a Divine elevation, to see a man who even under the most restricted circumstances will assert the right. How many people would have said, "Let dinner pass quietly over; do not outrage the conventional decencies of domestic society. Sit still. Be quiet. Eat your dinner, and when it is over we will see what can be done." But Jonathan took no such course. The bread was in his mouth, but he said, "I will not swallow it!" The cup was in his hand, but he said, "I will set it down again! I cannot make thee a wise and true king; but I can do the next thing,—I can protest against thee, and I will; and see, I leave thee with the fire of shame on my cheeks! I am ashamed, not because of David, but because of the king, my father!" Thank God for a man with a throat like that! There are so many of us that must have our dinner if all the Davids in creation were wronged!

I am afraid, however, that some of us are making

distinctions which in the long run will be found to be not only foolish but immoral and destructive. Do I not hear now and then some persons making a distinction between what they term *abstract* right and *practical* right? When the abstract right is trifled with, the practical right must sooner or later be thrown down. If any scheme of politics, education, government, social regeneration, is not metaphysically right, it never can be practically right in the long run. It may be expedient; it may be apparently right; it may do a little useful work for the time being; but if you are wrong at the centre, wrong in the highest metaphysical thinking, the outcome of your work will prove itself a failure. Get hold of a man who is right in the abstract, right in the soul, right in his theories; and beware, my young friend, of that man who says, "It's all very well, you know, in theory." If a thing be wrong in theory, it never can be right in practice. It may be veneered, painted, gilded, and done up for a price; but it never can be right out and out from the centre to the circumference. Jonathan in this case made a protest on behalf of the abstract right, the essential right; and his voice has gone through the generations like a thunderbolt! I thank God that we had such testimony, because it may now and again touch the heroic nerve in young natures, and prove that even yet there are men amongst us who will not see wrong without crying shame at least, and protesting against it.

Here we have *a disproof of a familiar proverb.* The familiar proverb is, "Blood is thicker than water."

Jonathan says, "Right is thicker than blood. David is no relation of mine physically; but David is an injured man; and my father is the individual who is injuring him, and I snap all ties that I may go and stand by the side of God and proclaim myself in favour of the right!" Consider no ties where righteousness is in question. There are secondary rights, and there are primary rights. You are your father's child, and you say you ought to be filial and obedient. The spirit of righteousness says, "No!" Children, obey your parents—*in the Lord.*" That is the explanatory qualification. Whatever your father tells you to do, if it be not "in the Lord," you have a right to resist. Whatever your Government tells you to do that is not "in the Lord" you have a right to protest against and to resist to the utmost. I fear we are serving some sub-gods, some under-deities, some little proxy kings, and forgetting the one eternal, absolute Ruler. We are measuring ourselves by false standards and not by the one great judgment. Will you do wrong for your father's sake, and call it filial obedience? There is only one Father. This term "father" that we use, we use only temporarily and with qualifications. One is your father—God! Let every tie be broken; let it go so that you serve Him who is clothed with righteousness, and who sits for ever in the light! Shall a man say, "If it had been anybody but my father, I certainly would have taken another course." ask you, what is the question in controversy? If it be a question of mere politeness, civility, honour due to age, attention required by the ordinary courtesies of life, then I honour you for honouring your father. But if it be

a moral question, a question as between right and wrong, your father ceases to have any claim upon your conscience if so be he indicate a course that is foul or questionable. You are in partnership with your father, and will you think to put down to his credit all the elements of the management that are not exactly to your taste? You cannot do so. You aggravate your own guilt by doing it. What am I then to do? To come out of it and to be separate. To leave my own flesh and blood? Yes! To be a stranger and an alien in the land? Yes! It is not necessary that you should *live*, but it is necessary that you should be *true*. Men delude themselves with these proverbs; they say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Nothing of the sort, unless the question be one that is very limited in its scope. "Blood is thicker than water." The question is not between blood and water; the question is between blood and God, blood and righteousness, physical kinship and eternal alliance with the virtues and the honesties of the universe. A man says, "You know I must live." I know, my friend, just the contrary, if it be a moral question that is involved! There is no need in creation for either you or me to live. It is a perfect fallacy to say, "You know I must live." No! I must be *good;* I must be *right;* I must be *honest;* I must be *true*. There your music is of a pure kind,—the angels march according to the beat of that rhythm. But when you say that you must *live*, it is the grandest mistake you can possibly make. Neither you nor I can be of the slightest consequence to the universe as mere existences. It is when there is virtue in us, life, nobleness, purity,

divinity,—it is then that the universe cares for us, and will keep itself together, as it were, for our convenience and progress. Are any of you at this moment deterred from doing right because your father is on the other side? Tell me. Kept in a wrong church, where the truth is not spoken, because your father has a pew there? Kept from the open profession of Christianity, because your father would feel annoyed if you said anything about it? Are you comforting yourself with this text from the fool's bible—"Blood is thicker than water"? Then, if you have given me a momentary advantage over you in electing me as your morning teacher for this one occasion, let me use what you yourselves have put into my hands, for the purpose of saying, Give up your father, rather than give up conscience, righteousness, truth, purity. Do not make his shame public, if you can avoid it; but let everything be struck down, rather than the spirit of righteousness shall be grieved or quenched. "Grieve not the Spirit: quench not the Spirit." Inasmuch as you have had bitter experience of this kind of conduct from your father, see to it that, in your turn, you give *your* children the benefit of a right example.

Here we have *the espousal of a noble policy.* What was the policy of Jonathan? He espoused the cause of right against might. David had no resources. Saul had everything; and Jonathan said, "I know that he is the king, that he is my father, and that he has life and death upon his lips, so far as this existence is concerned; but in the name of the eternal right I defy him!" Shall the example be lost upon us? Is there no weak cause you can espouse?

Will you do nothing to put down the evil side of that foolish proverb, "Nothing succeeds like success"? Beard success in its own den, fight the most popular evils, espouse the poorest and the weakest causes, if you believe that they are inspired by one element of right. It takes a strong man to stand alone. It is only a man here and there that can raise a tune; almost everybody tries to have a mumble after it is raised. But stand alone, young friend; stand alone, poor man; stand with the right. Do not stand with it presumptuously and self-displayingly, with self-idolatrous demonstrativeness; but stand beside it because it is right, with all meekness and self-control and purity and honesty. We are in the minority, but we are in the minority of God. You know that I do not believe in majorities, popularly so called. I believe that men should be weighed as well as numbered. I would rather have the support of one man of a certain kind than the support of ten thousand men of a kind directly opposite. If I could not have them both, I say, "Give me that one man. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'"

Now came a very beautiful little incident. Jonathan went out of the house, and took his way into the field by appointment, took a little lad with him, shot some arrows, called out to the boy words upon which himself and David had agreed; and David knew that anger was determined against him, "but the lad knew not the matter." There are unconscious workers in society. We do not know the full measure of all that we are doing. What are you doing, my little fellow? "I am picking up arrows for Jonathan, the king's son." That is the end of his tale, so

far as he knows it. Did he know that through him was telegraphed to a breaking heart that the king was determined against him? It is just so with us. We see part of our work, the other side of it we know nothing about. What a mysterious life, then, is this! We are observed; we are set in order; we are made instruments in some cases. We are called, with the consent of our will up to a certain point; and then, beyond that, we seem to be utterly helpless, not knowing the influences that are shed off the sides of our character, and the indirect results or the moral meanings of what we are doing. I have been comforted sometimes by people who did not know that they were comforting me. Sometimes a very poor and weak man, as the world calls poor and weak, has said something to me that has enabled me to redeem years of my life, bringing them back again so as to work with their experience; and the man has gone away without knowing that he has done anything. You give a child a book,—can you tell what the influence of that is to be in after years? You smiled upon some young man who is grappling with a difficulty. The smile cost you nothing. Yet seeing that it fell from your heart as well as from your face, it fell upon him like sunshine, and did another kind of work than that which it was intended at the moment it should do. So there is an unintentional and unconscious life. There is a part of our life that is lived on purpose; and there is a part of our life we know nothing about. There is a straight line; and suddenly it sweeps off into poetry and curvings. "No man liveth unto himself" in a far deeper sense than is usually attached to that passage. The boy

was not living unto himself. He was doing a poor kind of thing, without poetry or perspective in it, yet he was the telegraph between two hearts! My friends, this ought to invest life with something very solemn. I cannot tell what my work may do this morning. Why I was constrained to select this passage I cannot tell. It has been before me in my Bible for some time; and I have looked at some of the marginal notes upon it and said, "Shall I take up this subject or shall I not?" and last night something said to me, "Try it to-morrow." I do not know to whom I may be speaking, or what application this subject may have; but the word of the Lord cannot return unto Him void! It has an application; and if there be a man here who is trying to look as if it did not apply to him—thank God I see none such—that man is very possibly smarting in his conscience, a scorpion is stinging his heart, and we may see some good of it by-and-by. Children, obey your parents—let it be in the *Lord!* Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, obey your masters, but remember that One is your Master. Do not be deceived by sub-titles, by secondary divisions, but look at the primary, the essential, the everlasting.

What is the cure for all this social chaos, domestic trouble, secret pain, this wrong-doing as between kings and subjects, fathers and children, man and man? The one cure is the Cross of Christ. Have I not preached that with some consistency ever since you knew me? Have I ever given a second prescription for this malady of the world? If I have, oh! allow me now to tear it up, publicly

to tear it up, so that nobody can ever patch it together so as to make one word of it through all time. The prescription I will give is given to me. The prescription by which I would abide according to the exhortation of Scripture, the prescription which I would preach to all mankind is this: "The blood of Jesus Christ, God the Son, cleanseth from all sin." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Friends, we may veneer ourselves, and put ourselves into transient attitudes, but the only way to get right outwardly is to get right inwardly; the only one way to have clean hands is to have a clean heart; the only way to be holy is to have the Holy Spirit. You cannot hush society into a perpetual rest; you cannot beckon men into righteousness. You may say to Saul, "Saul, do not exclaim so to-day; and let this meal pass without putting these questions to Jonathan; see him, alone." He may for a moment heed you, but you have not arrested the man. You must get at his heart. So it is with all our social questions. You may give men better dwellings, you may give them better drainage, and better air. But never forget that, when man did fall, he fell, not in a metropolitan alley, not in a London sewer. He fell where the sunshine was broadest, where the rivers were deepest and calmest. When he fell he fell amid surroundings which God Himself had placed for his convenience and gratification. The only cure is not in change of circumstances, but in change of heart. May the Living One carry this word into our lives! Amen!

(*From Reporter's notes.*)

Life without Miracles.

"*John did no miracle.*"—JOHN x. 41.

MY purpose is to inquire how far it is possible to build up a really good and strong character without doing any works that are miraculous, romantic, or merely sensational. The life of John the Baptist furnishes us with an admirable study upon this subject. "Among them that are born of women there hath not appeared a greater than John the Baptist;" yet John did no miracle. He was "a burning and a shining light;" yet John did no miracle. "He was a prophet, yea," etc.; yet John did no miracle. "All that John spake of this man is true;" yet John did no miracle. Now how far is it possible for us to win the Master's approbation, and to come into a great estate of honour and joy, without having any power in things miraculous? Some of us may think we are living a monotonous and profitless sort of life, remarkable for nothing but sameness and insipidity; morning, noon, night coming round and round without our ever doing anything that strikes observers with amazement; always working in the same place, always surrounded by the same faces, always tethered by the same short string. Now if I can send one word of comfort into any heart that is mourning the

narrowness of its sphere and the monotony of its pursuits, my object will be answered. I must own that human life needs some such cheering. No doubt many people are without ambition or aspiration, and they need no help, but there are others to whom a word of interpretation and comfort will be as refreshing water in the tiresome journey of a commonplace life. Some of us, too, seem always on the very point of really doing something worth doing. It seems as if a miracle were the very next thing to be done, and that we only miss the doing of it by a hair's breadth.

We shall get some help in the direction of our morning study if we answer this question—UPON WHAT KIND OF LIFE DID JESUS CHRIST SET THE SEAL OF HIS BLESSING?

1. He specially blessed the spirit and ministry of John the Baptist; and yet John did no miracle:

(*a*) It is possible to be *true;* (*b*) *courageous;* (*c*) *self-controlled;* (*d*) *illustrious;* and yet to do no miracle.

2. That this approval was in no sense exceptional is made plain by other parts of Jesus Christ's recognition of man's life and work:

(*a*) Seventy returned; (*b*) cup of cold water; (*c*) employment of talents.

All this is made the clearer by a case on the other side—"In thy name done many wonderful works," etc.

When did Jesus Christ ever set a man in higher honour in His kingdom *simply because the man was a worker of miracles?*

What, then, are the qualities which God most esteems in us?

"A meek and a quiet spirit, which in the sight," etc.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," etc.

Nowhere is the *brilliant* man singled out, etc.: "Many that are first," etc.

(1) A word to the POOR; (2) WOMEN; (3) NOBODIES.

What doth the Lord thy God require of thee? Miracles? "To do justly," etc.

Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet CHARITY above all!

Hated for the Truth's Sake.

"I hate him, for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil."—CHRON. xviii. 7.

AHAB king of Israel is the speaker, and the speech was made to Jehoshaphat king of Judah. The name of the hated man was Micaiah. Four hundred men had told the king of Israel to go up to Ramoth-Gilead, but somehow Jehoshaphat felt that he would like additional testimony. That was a very strange thing! When four hundred prophets have said "Go," why should there be any desire to hear any other man? Yet we know exactly the meaning of this in our experience. Though we may have heard many voices, yet we feel that we have not heard the truth. We have heard a great noise, but no music; we have been dinned by a great clatter, but no word has got hold of our judgment or prevailed intelligently and honestly over our conscience. Jehoshaphat said in effect—There is a hollow sound in these voices; I miss the clear honest ring of simplicity and truth; the men themselves don't seem to believe their own message,—is there not another man somewhere who will speak to us in a sober and earnest way?

Now I think that in all this I see a wonderfully vivid picture of the very life which is round about us to-day: the accidents are different, but the substantial truth is the same; let us by heavenly help render this old story into modern speech, and lay that speech to heart, though we may suffer from it for a while.

1. What an appalling illustration is this of the fact that *men love to be flattered and encouraged even at the expense of everything holy and true.* "A wonderful and horrible thing is commenced in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and many people love to have it so." "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.)

2. What a vivid illustration is this of *the sublime function of an incorruptible truth-teller!*

This is not Micaiah's *first* appearance before the king. He had established his reputation as a God-fearing and truth-speaking man, and Ahab's denunciation was in reality Micaiah's highest praise. "Though I am a king and he a poor man," etc.

(*a*) No *wicked man* should be quite easy in the sanctuary.

(*b*) Do you suppose that it is *pleasant* for a minister to be always opposing any man?

(*c*) A man is not your *enemy* because he tells you the truth.

Opposition will come. "Blessed are ye when men," etc.

The truth-speaker will always create great opposition, but he is the safety of society!

3. What a striking instance is this of *the Lord giving a man up to the devices of his own wicked heart, and letting him take his own ruinous way!*

What is Life?

"*What is your life?*"—JAMES iv. 14.

WE have a life,—what are we going to make of it? That is the question to which I ask your attention.

The life we have is *short* at the best; the days run away with our strength, and whilst we work and hope we grow old. Our life is short, and it is far from *sure*. We may die in a moment. A gasp, and we have gone. So far, then, we have facts to deal with. Yet, though life is short and uncertain, it is wonderful in power; it can do wonderful things; it can work and suffer; it can write the "Paradise Lost;" it can invent the telegraph; it can sing the "Messiah." It is short, uncertain, mighty: it is but a pulse, yet it seems to come up from eternity,—it is but a flash, yet it gleams with the blaze of the sun. How it can love, and hate! How it can pray, and blaspheme! What are we going to do with it?

Let us look at a few ways, and make our choice.

1. The money-making way: WILL THAT DO?

2. The *mechanical* way. (Technical knowledge.) Suppose you take all the measurements of a house, but never speak to the occupants!

3. Pleasure.

Now all these ways of life have their right side. Under-

stand that. We cannot live without money. We can get but a little way on in life without knowledge. And every one of us needs pleasure, and ought to have more relaxation than some of us get now. But there are ugly circumstances in life which mar all the success that is possible along that line of movement. We have £50,000 a-year, but we cannot add one cubit to our stature, or make one hair white or black. We have vast estates, but we know not who will inherit them. We know every science, yet we cannot tell what will be on the morrow. We drink old wine out of golden goblets, but whilst we taste it our pulse stops, and we are living men no more! We are watched. Our very liberty is a prison. We never get our tower quite finished; in the act of putting on the pinnacle, the whole masonry rushes down, and kills the man who built it. We plant our fields, and the crops are eaten up by an almost invisible insect: you could shoot eagles, you could entrap elephants, but the very minuteness of this enemy baffles you; its power is in its very contemptibleness. We grow up to manhood, and we hardly halt there a moment until we turn the corner, and go quietly or hastily on to old age.

It is the business of the Christian teacher to keep these facts steadily before the public mind, and to draw the heart away from cisterns that are broken, from charms that are mocking, and to fix it upon things invisible, spiritual, divine. If life were a plain surface, a measurable quantity, an arithmetical table, with definite points and sums, the whole case would be changed; the battle would then be to the strong, and the race to the swift, and the weak hand

would be numbered with the foolish mind. But life is a mystery ; life is as exciting as a speculation, yet as solemn as a fact accomplished ; life is a pain, a chase in the dark, a force tethered to an invisible centre by an invisible thread ; a day wasting whilst it shines, hastening to darkness infinite, or speeding towards a morning cloudless and imperishable.

The question is, What are we going to make of it? And this question loses none of its importance from the fact that each life is but as a tiny island daily encroached upon by the never-slumbering sea.

1. What we want in life is a *supreme purpose* worthy of our powers. If our purpose is to be rich, the greatest section of our nature will be simply untouched or perverted. If our purpose is to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, our whole nature will be moved to its best exertions, and will produce its best effects. Am I not practically right in saying that in the vast majority of cases life *is simply frittered away?* It is not intentionally wasted. It is not wantonly debased. Far from it. But it has no centre, no method, no law of movement. The morning has no duty specifically its own, nor has the evening. The day ought to be as the year, with its spring, its summer, its autumn, and its winter,—in the morning sow thy seed, at mid-day let it ripen, in the eventide enjoy the well-mellowed fruit, and at night draw thy snowy coverlet around thee, and sleep until the spring-time wakes thee. But we are always getting ready to begin ; we will do something to-morrow ; we have a dream, and we must wait to see how the airy thing will embody and shape its

mystery ; we are looking out for a chance ; we are awaiting an inspiration ; in short, we are missing the chance in he very act of watching for it!

2. We want next a right view of those trials and circumstances over which we have absolutely no control. We should not regard them as lawless and haphazard, but as having causes, and as being themselves under control and direction. Take affliction as a mere accident, and it will fret and chafe you; take it as part of a plan, ultimately beneficent and triumphant, and it will make you think,—perhaps it will make you pray. Look upon disappointment as arising from a mere miscarriage of events perfectly under your own management, and you will find in such disappointment only a weapon for the wounding of your heart ; but feel that disappointment may be as a door shutting you out of the way where the tiger crouches and the lion prowls, and then you will thank God for sending a cloud upon your hope, and turning back the chariot of your ambition. You will be as thankful for some disappointments as ever you have been for some successes. Understand that there is a power round about you which you cannot outwit. It is not to be taken at unawares. It is not like a match of one degree of cunning pitted against another. Ask why you are baffled,—why you are not allowed to scale the only wall which separates you from the sunny land where the gardens bask in perpetual summer ; and such questionings will lead you back into solemn sanctuaries, and show you that the earth and all its affairs are under the direction and judgment of God.

What is my life? A mystery,—a cloud dark, yet edged with light, like the outside of heaven with overflowing glory; like a great may-be, a possibility, a destiny,—a ghost that may darken into a fiend, or brighten into an angel. I cannot tell what my life is—it is so much, so little; it is a killing pain, it is a maddening joy, a delirious gladness, a very hell of horror. Oh, 'tis so strange; it slopes up to heaven like an easy hill, and suddenly breaks off; and lo! I must come down again, or fall into mist, into gloom, into death.

What is my life—aye, what? I want to know what my life is. In the light it is comely sometimes; in the darkness hideous; now it is a valiant soldier, mighty in the fray; and now a mean coward, skulking in the darkness, if mayhap it may steal and not be seen, and look as if in prayer it had lost its worldliness and were clear set for heaven. My life says, I will, and, I will not; and how it says either I cannot tell; sometimes it is a tender mercy, beautiful as the morning dew, and sometimes a great cruelty, having no law but its own thirst. Like a pendulum it swings from prayer to blasphemy, and back again to prayer; and if it would die at prayer I might go to heaven, but if it stop at blasphemy I must go to hell, and blaspheme there through the ages, and grow worse, and still worse, until God Himself cannot know me as the child baptized in His own Name, and held up in public prayer in the old village church a million years before. My life! what is it? Is it eternity begun? Is it God set in miniature? Is it Divinity gone mad? I fight, and win, and

die. I plant the green vineyard and gather purple grapes, and as the wine foams in the full flagon, I fall down and cannot taste the inviting cheer. I build a high house, with roof that wind can never stir nor storm blow through, and when the blazing fire roars from the gleaming hearth, and Comfort, rosy-faced, beams upon me from the pictured walls, I'm sent for and thrust into the grave and prayed over as a failure here,—perhaps a failure there; handed over to the resurrection, to the Great Unknown, to ghost-land, and a cold stone with lies on it keeps my breast well down in the cold earth.

What is my life? A dream? A stage with actors on't? A mockery? An echo, not a voice? A hollow drum struck by an unseen hand, and beating its own death-march? Once my life was a child's rollick, half-trick, half-dream. I remember the coloured bubbles thrown from the pipe of fun and rolling leisurely on the summer air, and I now hear the child's laugh as they burst and went back into the silent nothing. Life was a rope-dance, a swing, a butterfly-chase, a mother's kiss, a tumble on the sea-sand, a run for baubles, a pail, a spade, a horse of wood, a whip, a hoop,—one mockery after another—a memory of things that used to please—a dream just on the wing!

What is my life? A school, a slate, a book that never made me wise just then, but afterwards? Long days in terror of the rod, a truant after hare-and-hounds, or feigning sickness to get to wood and water, and where bird-nesting made the day seem short—a clever cheating of the

master, spectacled and wise in look, but sour as if crab-poisoned, and irate with anger never more than half-asleep? A school, forsooth! Partly a play-house. A slate and top, a spelling-book and marbles, a grammar and cherry-stones, geography and foot-ball. A strange mixture, yet good enough. Work and play, light and shade, eternal friendships, Paradise regained and kept for ever. But wasting its own sweetness was that life! A little chap all fun, a boy all jacket, a great hulking lad, afraid to be seen lest taken for a man, lest chafered as a boy. A round cipher, not yet knowing whether the stroke would go up and make him six, or down and make him nine.

What is my life? A youthood bright with cloudless hope; a passion; an eye at a telescope; a picture nearly living, with quivering joy throbbing through its colours and making them palpitate with life. A hand upon a lock easily turned, and the door opening upon green fields and vineyards, and orchards blushing with the loveliness of May. No pain or ache, no twist in the long string of pearls; a face at every corner beckoning me with sweet smiles; a wind southerly, and rich with promises and blessings; a wild strength; a scornful laugh at difficulty; a challenge to presumptuous rivalry; a victory ere the fight began. O youthhood! It was then that destiny whispered to me; then the face came like a revelation, and the voice came from a cloud, and the other life came which made mine immortal. And childhood was forgotten; the white mice, the busy squirrel, the drawer full of childhood's treasure, —all gone, all laughed at, as I stood at the top of the

high ladder that overlooks the noble paths of manhood. I could not die. Where could death strike me? A breast clad in the armour of perfect health; a head that never throbbed with pain; a heart sound as forest oak,—these laughed at death, and bade the monster throw his weapons down and be a conquered ally. The doctor was for old women and misborn men, with leeches, pills, blisters, mixtures as before: a slope into the grave, the paid servant of Mortality and Ruin. Life was then a wild ha! ha! a summer picnic; a casket full of glittering jests and quips and cranks; a stealthy look at beauty; a long evening talk; a moonlight stroll; a row on a stream of molten silver. It was all sweet nonsense; words with double meanings; seriousness spoken as irony; a pleading Will you? an answering, If you will. Such bond-making, such oaths of fealty, such troth-plighting. O my soul, half blind with tearful memories, the long green lane is passed, and what remains is stony, bleak,—a rough road down into old age and helplessness!

But can such summers die? Can the colouring fade out—the may, the lilac, the chestnut bloom, the laburnum gold? Will the summer birds cease their song—the blackbird, the thrush, the nightingale? I have seen all, heard all, and they are just going. Why will they go? Why not always here? Does it become too cold for them? Do they feel the warning chill, and think of flight? Why not think of me? What will he do? thy might say—do when we have gone, when the flowers die, and the green leaves wither, and the winged singers flee away?

And the friends that started with me, where are they? The brown-haired lad, all smiles, and songs, and jokes; the mother whose embrace was heaven; the kind ones; the hearts that loved me; the tongues that never spoke one word of bitterness;—where are they all? It is so cold now that they are not here! Are they waiting for me? Do they ever look for me from the sunny gate of heaven? Are they near me? Do they expect me? Shall we talk old things over again, and be happy with immortal joy? O strange life! so wild, so calm; short as a span, long as infinitude; a low wail of grief, a psalm triumphant, a victory supreme.

What is my life? A sullied robe; a crime concealed; a treason against God. I "know the right, and yet the wrong pursue." I have sinned. I have grieved my Maker. I have played the mean trick; kept back the price; spoken the false word; said Yes, meant No; thought of self first, others last and least. The prayer has been upon my tongue, the loved sin under it. The hymn religious has not cleansed the mouth that sang it. I have bent my knee in prayer, and straightened it again to fight. I have wept over sin, and done again the sin that made me weep. I have stopped half-way home, and gone back to have one more day with the devil. I see oaths, vows, promises, lying behind me like tender blossoms shaken from the branches by rough winds in spring-time. My sin has taken all my strength away. I cannot look to God, for I have mocked His love. I dare not pray, lest God should strike me dumb for past unfaithfulness. If I

live, I shall get worse ; if I die, I'm lost. The circle round me is fire ; I cannot force my way through the burning cordon. My heart aches with the question, What shall I do? If I fight the great flame with straw, how great a fool I make myself! Would I quench it with my tears? It is but a dewdrop shed on Etna—an attempt preposterous and wild. Back again, and still again, and once more, and daily and incessantly the question comes, "What shall I do?"

And the great answer is, Do nothing of thyself. All is done for thee. The great Christ of God asks for no help of thine. He is mighty to save. He bids thee come to Him. Will be disappointed by thy reluctance. Yearns to have thee ; calls for thee ; bids thee come. Come now, with tears for sin. Come now ; down-broken, shattered, blind, cursed, diseased to the bone, and festering in the marrow. One touch of His heart's blood, and thou art born again ; thou art a child, the universe is thine, the stars thy playthings, and the sky thy home.

What is thy life? O bruised one, think! Why wilt thou be stricken any more? Why remain in the cold bitter blast, when thy Father's house is ready, warm with love, and musical with welcomes?

My life? A ship that started well. All canvas set. A fair wind. A sea all sun. Then a cloud ; then a lurid glare ; then a lightning-bolt ; and the ship staggered in pain and fright. A great north wind, harsh, mighty,

tempestuous, and then a sickening fear that I might never reach the shore. Perhaps go down in mid-sea; perhaps perish in sight of land; perhaps go in more lost than found, a wreck to cry over.

My life? A bright bird, tuneful, brilliant exceedingly; seeking the sun; singing as I soar; cleaving the wind and getting higher, and singing more blithely and more still; when an arrow strikes me, and I fall bleeding to the earth. Music gone; heart going; nothing but my own blood about me.

Jesus save me! Christ redeem me! Lord keep me! I am weak and poor. My lies and prayers are so mixed, I cannot separate them. I am eloquent and dumb; rich and poor; dying and immortal;—God help me!

> "A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On Thy kind arms I fall."

Empty Places at the Lord's Table.

"*David's place was empty.*"—1 SAM. xx. 25.

I. *Some absent who might be expected to be present.*—(*a*) Children of good parents. (*b*) Hearers of the Word (Long). (*c*) Those who have proved the vanity of the world for themselves.

II. *Some apparently absent who are really present.*—(*a*) The timorous and fearful. (*b*) Those whose *love* is greater than their *hope*.

III. *Some present who ought to be absent.*—(*a*) Hypocrites. (*b*) Schemers.

IV. *Some absent on the most frivolous excuses.*—(*a*) Nothing worth hearing. (*b*) Inconsistencies of other people.

Application.—(*a*) Are we *afflicted* by such absences? (*b*) How far are we *responsible* for them? (*c*) The work of the Church is not done so long as there is *one* absentee!

The Control of the Imagination a Spiritual Duty.

"*I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.*"—DEUT. xxix. 19.

AN ineffectual attempt has been made to show that the temptation of our Lord was not literal, and that the account of it is to be read as a parable rather than as a fact. According to the parabolical theory, we are not to think of a real wilderness, a real temple, or a real mountain, but to think of them as if they *might have been* real. I do not see what is to be gained by this violation of the letter, and for my own part I cannot approve it; but I take advantage of the suggestion for the purpose of showing that certain temptations assail us as powerfully through the *imagination* as if they assumed the most distinctly palpable and tangible form. That is to say, I shall contend as strongly for the reality of imagination as for the imagination of reality; or, more clearly, that we realize some things that are imaginary, and we only imagine some things that are real.

To the unhealthy imagination the ghost or spectre, or whatever it may be that brings with it fear and trouble, is *real*. Probably you would say to the sufferer, "This is all fancy on your part, there is really no such thing as you imagine; and from *your* point such is undoubtedly the

case. Nevertheless, the ghost is real to the excited imagination of the sufferer. So, we inquire, Do dreams come true? Why, they *are* true! They are amongst our most positive experiences; we have undergone their torture or their pleasure, as the case may be; whether they shall pass into other forms of reality, and so repeat themselves in facts visible to others, is a wholly distinct question. You see, then, a little more clearly the direction and scope of this momentous subject, and how important it is not merely to watch what are usually known as the dangerous sides of our nature, but to keep under severe control the ever accessible and easily captivated power of imagination.

Eve was assailed through her imagination when the devil said to her, "Ye shall be as gods;" and Jesus Christ was assailed through His imagination when "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" were offered to Him. And, indeed, if we take any temptation, excepting (and even that doubtfully) the very lowest and coarsest, we shall be surprised to learn how subtly and mightily imagination inspires and enforces it. An instance or two may make this clear. A man is tempted to commit fraud, say; well, it is not the mere money strictly in itself considered that he wants, but the independence, the ease, the influence, or even the indulgences, which it is supposed to secure. The mere money (except the man be a miser), considered simply as so much metal, is the very least part of the thing that is desired; he wants something *beyond*, and that farther region is created and illumined by his imagination. But take a less vulgar instance. Suppose the temptation should be purely spiritual, so strictly con-

fined to the individual consciousness as never to assume a visible form or pass into outward gratification; call it, if you like, "rolling iniquity under the tongue as a sweet morsel," a revelry in the heart of which no observer knows anything; then, truly, is the imagination the great instrument of the devil. It turns the heart into a "chamber of imagery," and makes the soul the drudge of its cruel mastery. All day long the soul may be drained of its strength, and the intellect and the will may be utterly impoverished and wasted by incessant taxation. Yet everything is hidden from the outer world! A veil impenetrable conceals the foul saturnalia!

We sometimes say that it is the one grain of truth in a false statement which enables the lie to live; if the statement were wholly and absolutely false, it could be crushed by a positive and unreserved contradiction; but if there is one element even of remote probability in it, or the faintest colouring of truth even in a point of less than secondary importance, the statement may have a long and mischievous life. Something of the same kind may be said about a temptation; if it were to come to us in all its grossness, and to force upon the calm steady eyes of our reason its vilest aspect and purpose, it would probably have small chance with most of us. But it comes otherwise! It comes through an imagination which throws its hideousness into perspective and creates a halo around its immediate advantages; we are not going to sin; we are only going to know good from evil, and to be as gods; we are merely thinking of taking one hurried view into the appalling abyss,—that is all. So we dupe our own hearts,

and light our way with the lamp of fancy into the darkness where no lamp can burn.

It is imagination, too, that supplies a ready answer to the reproaches of conscience. Good is to come out of the evil. Imagination pleads that its purpose has in some way miscarried, or the evil would certainly have been less. Or, failing to verify these pleas, imagination projects itself into the future and speaks confidently of compensations, higher views, subtler alchemies that shall transmute and purify the past. So we are blinded and duped by incessant imaginings, and instead of building on a rock we flounder in a cloud.

The sinful exercise of the imagination is not the less, but probably the more, aggravated because of its supposed secrecy. And it is most instructive to follow the course of discovery revealed along the whole line of Bible history. From beginning to end, God's eye has never been withdrawn from the *imagination* of men; He has not waited for the overt act,—He has known the thought "afar off." It will be interesting to prove this.

In Genesis (viii. 5) we read: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Here you have a public survey and a private scrutiny. Anybody could see the general wickedness, but God only could see the secret fountains out of which it issued; the point is, that He *did* see them.

In Genesis viii. 21 we read: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Yet every imagination is known as truly as if it had embodied itself in the most

flagrant and glaring crime. David puts this very strongly in his dying speech to Solomon (1 Chron. xxviii. 9), "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." And a still more vivid view is given of this same Divine knowledge in the eighth chapter of the prophecies of Ezekiel. The prophet himself saw only that which was outward, but the Lord saw the inner life and the hidden deed. Ezekiel was brought to a door in the court, and when he looked he saw a hole in the wall, and when he digged in the wall he found a door, and when at the bidding of God he went in, he beheld every form of creeping things and abominable beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall round about, and things worse and worse were shown unto the prophet until he might have used the words of Paul (Eph. v. 12), "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." So the imagination cannot be concealed from God. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

The subject thus opened reminds us:—First: Of the intense and awful *spirituality* of God and His judgment. Second: Of the wonderful provision He has made for the *cleansing and inspiration of our innermost thoughts.*

Judged outwardly, our character may draw to itself very general and cordial applause, but judged spiritually, who can stand? "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit." Out of the *heart* proceed murders, thefts, adulteries!

Job's Comforters:

SCIENTIFIC SYMPATHY.

"*Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble.*"—JEREMIAH ii. 28.

"*Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.*"—JUDGES x. 14.

"*Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off.*"—HOSEA viii. 5.

THERE was a man in these latter days whose name was Job; the same was a follower of Jesus Christ, and his delight was in the law of God, from whom was all his expectation. Job went amongst men as one who ceased not from prayer, nor hesitated to declare the sufficiency and joyfulness of a life of faith in the Son of God. Day by day he blessed his bread in the name of heaven, and set the Lord always before him as the source of his strength and the giver of every good gift. And unto Job were born sons and daughters, and as for his wheatfields and orchards, they were fruitful beyond measure. And it came to pass that a sudden blight fell upon the whole fortune of Job, and that Job himself was bowed down in weakness and in great fear. His children perished out of his sight, and his ground brought forth abundantly no more; and it was as if God had forsaken him in unexplained and terrible anger,

and given him over as a prey to the enemy. Yea, his wife also spake not the word of sympathy, but talked of death as the only release from grief so unendurable. Now, when the new leaders of human thought heard of all the evil that was come upon Job, they came every one from his own place: Huxley the Moleculite, John Stuart the Millite, and Tyndall the Sadducee. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and saw Job more a shadow than a man, they whispered to each other, "This comes of religious faith," and they hastened towards him with swift feet. So they sat down beside the shattered man, and in less than seven seconds Stuart the Millite began metaphorically to throw stones at his bewildered head.

"Just what might have been expected," said he; "this comes of your star-gazing, and of reading the patriarchs, instead of watching the markets. I always say that a man brings all this sort of thing upon himself, and that as he makes his bed, so he must lie upon it. Excuse me, Job, if I don't speak in the old mealy-mouthed way. Be your own God, and then pray as much as you like."

But Job answered and said: "Oh that my grief were understood, and that ye could heal the pain that is in mine heart! for then would I bless you as those who speak wise words. Behold, this cometh not of mine own hand; for wherein have I dared the Most High to overwhelm me?"

Then answered Huxley the Moleculite and said: "Cease from thy languishing, nor let thy repining any longer be heard. Understand thou that this disturbance is entirely molecular: by some means or other the molecules have got into a disordered condition, and that singular whity-

brown fluid found in the heads of human animals has become a little addled, diluted, or otherwise injured, and hence these phenomena. All animal life is more or less subject to this visitation, and, viewed scientifically, yours, Job, is a singularly beautiful case."

Whereupon Job moaned in the bitterness of his soul, and cried, saying: "Oh that my children were about me as in the days that are gone, and that I could recall the light which made my home a scene of gladness! If not, would God I might die and be at rest! My children! my children! whence have ye fled from me?"

Then answered Tyndall the Sadducee, and said: "Thy children have melted into the infinite azure of the past, as all living things must melt. They have gone again to the dust; but in their decomposition there will be liberated gases and other elements, which, mingling with ditto ditto, otherwise flying about, and on the outlook for whatever they can extract from dead individuals, will contribute somewhat to the nourishment of animals and plants; and in this way the children of Job will be of great use in the chemic economy of nature."

Then was Job full of indignation, and his soul was overwhelmed within him. "Miserable comforters are ye all," said he; "and yours is the wisdom of fools. Have ye seen sore trouble, and has your day been suddenly turned into night, or have your eyes stood out with fatness, and your souls been long at ease? Know ye what it is to be carried away as with a flood, and to be thrown down by an irresistible arm? Your words are strange to me, and your speech without savour."

Then answered John Stuart the Millite, and said: "Are thy children more than the children of other men that they should live for ever? Reform the sanitary arrangements of the country, return a thoroughly representative parliament to St. Stephen's, give women the franchise, and let all leading articles be signed by the names of the writers, and then we may look for better health, higher wages, and more general comfort. This you may call utilitarianism, but I call it common sense."

And Huxley the Moleculite said: "Why grieve for children? and why moan and groan over the inevitable? You should take a scientific view of all things. What my friend the Sadducee has said is strictly scientific. We live upon one another all through and through creation. We find the origin of protoplasm in the vegetable world; the plants drink the fluid containing carbonic acid, water, and ammonia, and thus maintain themselves in vigour, and then the animals in their turn eat the plants and perform a high feat of constructive chemistry by converting dead protoplasm into the living matter which is appropriate to itself."

Thereupon, in paternal anguish and rage, Job smote Huxley the Moleculite to the ground; and Tyndall the Sadducee exclaimed, "Why this, O Job?" And Job answered in bitter sarcasm: "The molecules! And God do so to me, and more also, if I smite you not one and all for your madness and cruelty. Oh, my children! my children!"

But Huxley the Moleculite, and John Stuart the Millite, and Tyndall the Sadducee, reasoned with Job, and besought

him to restrain himself, and offered to lend him their complete works to wile away his childless hours and his consuming sorrows. Moreover, Tyndall the Sadducee answered and said: "We are the founders of a new school, we are the valiant leaders of a new age, and we are prepared to suffer a good deal of advertisement, and are willing to risk all the consequences of a remunerative circulation of our books: let me speak to thee, I pray thee, nor let thine anger be too hot."

Then Job answered, "Say on." And when Huxley the Moleculite had retired from Job according to the square of the distance which formerly separated them, Tyndall the Sadducee opened his mouth and said, "What is thy complaint, and what is thy desire, that we may answer thee?"

And Job answered: "My complaint is that I am sore wounded, and that my life is impoverished and filled with woe. The delight of mine eyes is taken away, and no longer is mine ear filled with music. They that knew me turn away from me, and they that understood me are numbered with the dead. Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that He would let loose His hand and cut me off! Is there not a God in heaven, and is not He King over all the earth? Why is His hand heavy upon me, and for what reason hath He shut up my soul in darkness? Answer me, if ye have understanding."

"We will answer thee," said the Sadducee, "and let thee know the measure of our wisdom. We have stretched our minds across cosmic spaces and cosmic periods, and

have seen the sufficiency of matter to grow and re-combine, and produce startling effects; we have seen nothing indeed of which matter is incapable: it seems to be its own secret and its own origin. Still there is an Inscrutable Power somewhere; we know nothing about it; neither does any man. There is, we own, a Secret which we cannot make out; and our resolution is never to attempt its explanation. For my own part I have not even a theory of magnetism, much less a theory of the universe. Let us keep within our own limits, and lay down our work at the call of Nature. Be quiet. You are in trouble; you have lost your children; your high social estate is gone. Be it so; take these things philosophically, and don't let your courage fail you."

"Beside," added John Stuart the Millite, "as our knowledge of Nature extends we shall get more command over disease, and even death itself. When public baths are more known and appreciated, and the higher education of women is advanced, I imagine we shall dry up nine-tenths of the troubles of life."

"O fools and hard of heart!" said Job, "have you no more answer to my grief than this? When a man's life is desolate, will a theory of magnetism recover his comfort and peace? When he has discovered the tomb in the midst of his garden, will the ballot make his heart glad with unspeakable joy? You tell me there is a Secret in the universe which you cannot explain; but because *you* cannot explain it, is it therefore impossible of explanation? There is a stone which I cannot lift; does it therefore follow that no other man can lift it? Is there healing for my

body, and none for my soul? Is there bread for my physical hunger, and no food for the fiercer hunger of my heart? You mock me: you wish me to give the lie to my own consciousness: you tempt me to commit spiritual suicide;—miserable comforters are ye all!"

"Still," said Huxley the Moleculite, with chastened air, "we must be scientific. Let me lay it down that matter and spirit are but names for the imaginary substrata of groups of natural phenomena."

"And pray who told you that?" said Job. "You chatter great words with glibness, and make fine speeches, but you find for me no fountain in the wilderness, nor can you assuage the swelling of my woe. Is there not something deeper in life than you have yet touched? A wounded spirit who can bear? Will not God hear me when I cry, or will He hide Himself from my approach? Can a man live upon the wind, or satisfy himself with hard words, or rest his head upon the sharp rocks? Have you had pain like mine, or have ye lived in gaiety, and sat at the table of plentifulness? When did the lion rend you, or the wolf lie in wait for your appearing? Ye know not whereof ye affirm, else would your speech be chastened, and your words be few."

Then up rose Tyndall the Sadducee, and hastily said: "Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? Let me ask Job a question or two that may comfort him in a rational and not in a sentimental manner. What is the vegetable world but the result of the complex play of molecular forces? What is it which tears the carbon and the hydrogen

from the strong embrace of the oxygen? Is it possible for the undeflected human mind to return to the meridian of absolute neutrality as regards ultraphysical questions? Let Job consider these and a million similar questions if he would be really comforted. Let him read Fichte in the morning, and commit Emerson's poems to memory on Sundays, and always keep by him a good translation of Plato; and above all things let him doubt those who pretend to see in cholera, cattle plague, and bad harvests, evidences of Divine anger. And now that I am speaking I will make a clean breast of it at all hazards. Prayer is wasted breath. The law of gravitation crushes the simple worshippers in the Methodist chapel while singing their hymns, just as surely as if they were engaged in a midnight brawl. Job must hold his feelings in control. Let the Moslem give way to them in his battle-cry, and the Red Indian wake the echoes of his hunting grounds with such wild howls; but when Job can attend scientific lectures at the Royal Institution, or take a course of evening lectures at the School of Mines, he ought to conduct himself in a rational way in time of misfortune, and show himself to be a philosopher."

Then answered John Stuart the Millite, with unusual warmth: "I, too, have been in trouble, but I needed no sackcloth, nor scattered any ashes on my head. I took a philosophic course. I mounted a philosophic steed, and sped away from my trouble. If Job will hear me, he shall know how to keep distress under his feet, and to defy the threatening storm. What time I am afraid I flee to metaphysics, and when conscience threatens to get the upper

hand of me I consider the functions and the logical value of the Syllogism. When my father, who would never *allow* me to have any convictions about religion different from his own, melted into the infinite azure of the past, I comforted myself under such melting by testing Berthollet's curious law, that two soluble salts mutually decompose one another whenever the new combinations which result produce an insoluble compound, or one less soluble than the two former; and the comforting effect of the experiments was remarkable,—so much so that in an ecstasy of scientific surprise and delight I almost wished that he had melted sooner, that I might have had longer possession of this prize. Oh that Job would do something of the same kind! He would forget the past in a trice, and be as happy as I am. Let me put you in possession of a secret, if by doing so I can rally the dejected Job. When I die there will be found in my desk the manuscript of my Autobiography, and so sustained was I by philosophic reflection during its composition, that never once in its pages have I mentioned my mother! Nobody could know from my Autobiography that I ever had a mother! That is what I call self-control! Other people talk of their mothers, and their mothers' influence, and their mothers' prayers, and their mothers' example, but I never own the relationship; I keep on the airy highlands of philosophy, and avoid the close and relaxing valleys of sentiment. Once, indeed, I was about to give way to the common folly, but I recovered my self-restraint by showing the fallacious reasoning which has been founded on the law of inertia and the first law of motion, and I never lost

my balance again. If Job would take some such course, his grief would be for ever dissipated."

And to the same effect Huxley the Moleculite, who had insensibly increased his distance from Job: "I have often steadied myself under a stunning blow by remembering that protoplasm, simple or nucleated, is the formal basis of all life. This has been a great comfort to me in many distresses. When death has invaded the household of any of my friends, I have always proved to them that all living powers are cognate, and that all living forms are fundamentally of one character, and they have invariably thanked me for my sympathetic and consolatory expressions. One dear old friend of mine, who suddenly lost all his income in a railway crash, would, I believe, have died of a broken heart, had I not asked him to compare in his imagination the microscopic fungus—a mere infinitesimal ovoid particle—with the gigantic pine of California, towering to the dimensions of a cathedral spire; and my friend no sooner complied with my request than in a wave of victory, as Tyndall the Sadducee would call it, he was lifted far beyond rolling stocks and permanent ways with their fickle dividends and their treacherous attractions. It is very pleasing to me to find that there is in science that which will heal 'a mind diseased.' Job, be encouraged by our words; rest upon them as upon a sure foundation, and in passing through the various experiences of life always remember that a nucleated mass of protoplasm is the structural unit of the human body. This you will find a catholicon for human ills."

Then Job arose from the ground and turned his face

towards the heavens, nor spake one word to those who offered him stones for bread. In his eyes were standing great tears, and on his countenance was the stamp of unutterable grief. Then the Lord took up his cause, and answered his comforters out of the whirlwind :—

"How old are ye, and what is the measure of your days? Ye mighty men and mocking comforters, answer me, that I may know the strength of your understanding and the dignity of your judgment. What will happen on the morrow? And can you, who are unable to turn over a single page of passing time, read all the volume of eternity gone, and comprehend the measure and the reason of all things? Is the universe without a Maker, a Guardian, a Friend? Are there no boundaries set to power, and is there no watch appointed over ambition? Can the eagle soar quite into the sun, or build his nest amidst the forests of the stars? Can any man deliver his friend in the day of death, or travel with him into the great waters and return from the gulf? Is there no angel of mercy spreading mighty but gentle wings over all the world, sending the seasons in their course, the rains in rich showers, and the fire to warm the earth all summer long? Are there no mysteries in life which make you pause and for a moment turn your flippancy into, at least, an appearance of sobriety? Know ye the invisible bonds which keep you within an appointed sphere? Can you shut your door upon those powers which wither your pride and take away all the sap of your strength? You call me a Secret and an Inscrutable Force, and ye deny My power to reveal Myself to the children of men. Who *are* you that you

should set yourselves against Moses and David, Ezekiel and Daniel, John and Paul? You have told my servant Job what you can do in the hour of human darkness and sore distress, and behold your helplessness and the vanity of your strength!"

Then Job cried aloud, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him! He hath been with me in six troubles, and in seven He will not cast me off. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Miserable comforters are ye all, though ye are the men, and wisdom will die with you! When you have exhausted your petty science, what have you told me that can touch the agony of my heart or bring back the light of my house? If *your* theory be right, why should I suffer all this misery when in a moment I can end all my distress? If this chastening be for no higher good, why should I not interrupt it by the instant destruction of my consciousness? You mock me, but you have no satisfaction for my heart. You throw hard words at me, but you have no balm for my healing. Ye are as a bowing wall and a tottering fence: I will not lean upon you. The Lord is my light and my salvation. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; Thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit. Thine anger endureth but a moment; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning! I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes; nevertheless, Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee. Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see my defence as Thou seest it!"

And the Lord opened the eyes of the leaders of science, and they saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Job; and the Lord opened their ears so that they heard voices other than of men, saying, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them: He shall give His angels charge over thee in all thy ways. The Lord of hosts is with thee, the God of Jacob is thy refuge."

And the heart of Job was lifted up in praise, and through the sob of his woe there came forth Alleluias unto the Lord. Yea, he magnified his God, and praised Him with many psalms: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds; He is the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that my loved ones are standing before Him, glad in His light and beautiful in His holiness. Praise the Lord!"

And it came to pass that Job's three comforters—Huxley the Moleculite, Stuart the Millite, and Tyndall the Sadducee—gathered together their inaugural addresses at the British Association, their lectures at the School of Mines and the Royal Institution, their dissertations upon the ballot and the higher education of women, and returned with them to their several places. And it came to pass as they journeyed that they came near to a beautiful stream, spanned by a suspension bridge, nigh

unto which there nestled the thatched cottage of a ranger in the woods.

"That," said Stuart the Millite, "seems to be an ideal house, though so simple and unpretending. How clean the place is, and sweet-looking, and how these tangled flowers on the front brighten it and give it quite a jewelled appearance; and a beautiful peep of the river must be caught from that western window."

And it came to pass as they drew near to the house that the ranger in the woods leaned himself against an aged tree, and seemed as if he did so in heaviness of heart. And it was even so, for lifting up his eyes and seeing three men bearing many books, he said unto them:

"Be ye learned men who can tell us what to do when we are dizzy and senseless?"

"Perhaps indeed we can help you a little," said Huxley the Moleculite; "at any rate we are quite willing to try."

"Come with me then, and see what is in the house. I lost her mother but a twelvemonth since, and now she's slipping away."

But Huxley the Moleculite and Stuart the Millite and Tyndall the Sadducee shrank from the man, and in remembrance of the sufferer they had left they dared not to speak of the sympathy of science.

"But mayhap you will pray with the child, and not pass by her on the other side. In such books as yours there must be something for broken hearts like mine. It is but a step or two to the girl's bedside. Come!"

"It would be but wasted time, my friend," said Stuart

the Millite, "for we have no power over the laws of nature."

"But cannot you speak comfortably to the child? for she says the river is very cold, and, bless her, her feet are very young."

"You are not so very near the river, my friend," said Stuart the Millite. Whereupon the man turned away, and answered with a great sob.

And it came to pass as the leaders of science had gotten away to the height of a distant hill, that they laid down their books and rested a while. And presently Tyndall the Sadducee opened his mouth and said: "We have been out of our depth to-day, and perhaps we had no business along this road at all. These books of ours are invaluable in their places, and very likely they are indispensable to the higher education of the world; but there are two men along this road who somehow need something that we have not got to give them. It is no use concealing the fact, or making it look less important than it is. I wish a great poet would arise who could sing these woes to sleep and charm us out of our ill-fortunes."

And it came to pass that the Lord turned the captivity of Job and made him glad with new joy; yea, He crushed for him the finest of the grapes and gave him wine with His own hand; and upon his wheatfields and orchards He sent the benediction of sun and shower until their abundance returned and was multiplied. And Job rebuilt his altar and bowed down before God with all reverence and love, and sang the praises of the Most High with a loud

voice, and made a joyful noise unto the Rock of his salvation. And in the day of his prosperity, Job sent for the books of Huxley the Moleculite, John Stuart the Millite, and Tyndall the Sadducee, and read them all with an attentive eye. Then he rose up and said: "O wise yet foolish men! your books are full of knowledge and instruction, and mighty men are ye in the fields of learning. But have ye forgotten that there is a spirit in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding? Know ye the way into the heart when it is in ruins? or can ye lift up those who are pressed down by the hand of God? Keep your learning in its proper place and it will help the progress of the world; but attempt not with it to heal the wounds of the heart. Not to your wisdom but to your simplicity will God reveal Himself: 'He hath hidden himself from the wise and prudent, and shown forth his beauty unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.'"

And the woodman's little girl? Was the river so very cold when her young feet touched it? We cannot follow far along that drear road, nor see far into that great darkness. But there was no splash in the water; there was a quivering in the arch which spanned it, from which the ranger knew that his child had been taken, not through the river, but over the bridge, to the mountains of myrrh and the hills of frankincense.

Parables.

THE lodgings looked very well from the outside, and the clean old lady who had them to let seemed just the sort of person who would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. She was a widow—husband had been a solicitor; she now lived in a large house in a blind alley (solemnly quiet) and let lodgings. I stowed myself away very hopefully in the top room but one, and promised myself a long spell of writing. Towards evening I had paper, pens, and ink all in order to begin chapter first of my new book, and was looking towards the ceiling for my first idea, when suddenly a brass band struck up, and shook the blind alley through and through. I rushed downstairs to know where this brass band was, and the calm old lady replied that she had "omitted to mention" that the man next door was a teacher of music, and that three evenings a-week he was the plague of her life. Then, said I, my time for writing must be early in the morning, and three evenings in the week I must stroll in the fields. Five o'clock next morning saw me astir. Again my eye was on the ceiling, and to my horror I heard a noise overhead that suggested that someone must surely be keeping a factory up there; yet the idea was absurd. But the noise

was like nothing else. I heard wheels going plainly. At breakfast the calm old lady meekly said she had "omitted to mention" that the lodger in the top flat was in the habit of giving her child a ride at home every wet morning, and when I said, "A ride in what?" she briefly replied—"A perambulator, sir."

I was but a young man fresh from the hills, and did not like to complain. It was only right, however, that I should look out for other lodgings, and accordingly I hasten off to a remote suburb. Dark when I arrive. Nice house, with garden back and front; rooms rather lofty, and tidily furnished. Terms a guinea a-week, without gas or coals. Liked the lodgings, and was just going to conclude the bargain, when I sniffed something in the air. "Something burning?" I inquired. "No, sir; I omitted to mention the brickfield." "How near is it?" "Just at the bottom of the garden, sir—quite omitted to mention it for the moment."

In due time I was able to buy a horse. Bay, good height, strong, and nice-looking. Price large, but not too large considering ancestry, training, and personal appearance. Paid the money and got receipt. "By the way," said the seller, "I omitted to mention that this horse never can be got to go down hill, and no power of man can make it go over a brook. I am sorry that I omitted to mention that." I was sorry too, for I was just logician enough to see that it would be a fatal mistake on my part to take a horse up a hill if it never could be persuaded to come down again, and this would very much limit the area of the horse's operations.

It was now time that I had a house of my own. I could afford but one servant to begin with, and I made it my business to look out for one that was good. In this respect I was very fortunate. The young woman was quite above the average: an early riser, a good cook, and extremely anxious to oblige. For something like a month we were as happy as could be. One day my wife rang the bell, but no reply was made; another ringing met no better fate; nor did a third; whereupon my wife made her way to the kitchen, and there found the damsel speechless and nearly blind. It was afterwards found out that the person who recommended the young woman had "omitted to mention" that as a reformed drunkard the unhappy creature occasionally gave way to the force of her old habits.

The time had now come for me to be enlarging my business and my income. Having heard of a profitable opening, I went out to a fine oil-producing estate, and there I saw with my own eyes the oil pumped up until I was afraid it would overflow the tank and run to waste. In this magnificent business I embarked my little all; but upon further inquiry, as no profits were coming in, it appeared that the foreign gentleman to whom I had entrusted my money had "omitted to mention" that he had pumped the oil out of a tank I could not see into the one which was filled to the point of overflow.

But does not all this show a very nice spirit on the part of society? There is an unwillingness to mention disagreeable things. One tradesman does not like to mention that his meat is unfit for human food; another does not

wish to wound your feelings by showing you how he adulterates his goods; the debtor omits to mention that when you see him again it will be in the Bankruptcy Court; and the landlord omits to mention, until the agreement is signed, that the last tenant died of an infectious disease. And yet there are people who do not believe in original sin! Nice people who scout the idea! People who say there is no need for religious help or religious hope! I do not know how it is with others, but for my own part the more I study human nature and its curious ways the more I feel that nothing short of Divine power can reach its corruption so as to destroy it for ever. "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew within me a right spirit." "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

A MAN who keeps an inn told me a thing last week which some of you young friends will like to hear. He said that seventy guests had come to his house, one after another, and had acted in a very strange way. First of all, he had never actually seen any one of them, but he had seen a good many things that they had done. They were very odd guests indeed; they came and stayed and went at regular intervals; they could be very harsh and they could

be very gentle; when they first came they quite forced their way into the inn, whistling and screaming and tearing, and shaking everything, and if he found fault with them they nearly took him off his feet in their wild rage. At other times they quite made a pet of him; they gave him flowers and birds, and took him away to see green hills and lovely dells and streams; and then they sent him fruit and wine and all sorts of good things; and last of all they turned round upon him, though he had done nothing to make them angry, and were as violent as ever; he would try to please them and to keep them, but they would not be pleased and they could not be persuaded to stay, and away they went out of the house as roughly and unkindly as they first came in. Last of all they began to speak to him of a big brother of theirs, and they said he should see him some day soon. And what do you think the man who kept the inn found out? Why he found out that the seventy guests had been quietly robbing him all the time! And more than that, they had done something to him to pull down his strength: he could not run upstairs as he used to do, nor go about his business as he did formerly, nor do anything as he did it before they came to his inn in such great numbers. As he was telling me all this another man came up and heard the story, and when he heard it he laughed and said, "Why, I keep an inn, and the same guests have been in my house, and instead of robbing me they have made me rich! They did not behave any better in my inn than they behaved in yours, but I am bound to say they did not rob me, and that they gave me more than they got from me!" This was a very

strange thing. To rob one man and to make another man rich was as odd a thing as I ever heard in my life! The second man said that the guests had also spoken to him about their big brother, and said how pleased they would be to take him to their brother's house. I did not know what to make of the stories of these two innkeepers, for I saw they were not jesting with me but speaking quite seriously.

What do you think I did? I went to the man who lives in the tower of the City Temple and told him all about it, and when I finished he said,—

"I have had five-and-twenty of these gentlemen up here, and I don't care if I never see another of them."

"What," said I, "have they been robbing you, too?"

"Oh no, they have not begun that little trick just yet, but I know quite well that they will rob me if they can."

"Well," said I, "we must set a watch at the door."

"But they get in at the window!"

"Then we must put iron-work around the window."

"But they come in with the air!"

"Whatever do you mean?" said I.

Then he took some pictures out of his drawer, and said, "I will show you the portraits of these seventy guests. Look here! Ten of them are laughing, gambolling, sunny little people; ten of them are rather common-looking, nothing at all particular about them; twenty of them are busy bustling men who hardly have a moment to spare; ten of them are getting just a little tipped with grey here and there; and the other ten, look at them! five of them

lean, unhappy, and disagreeable; and five of them rich, pleasant, cheerful, and kindhearted."

"And where is the big brother?"

"Never would sit for his portrait. Too mighty and too grand for that!"

As I looked rather uneasy, he said to me, "Don't you know the seventy guests and their big brother?"

"No."

"Then let me tell you. The inn is the body; the seventy guests are seventy YEARS; they robbed the one man because he had nothing but a body; they made the other man rich in memory and richer still in hope; and the name of the big brother, whose portrait has never been taken, is ETERNITY.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher

be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern."

Do you know that there is in the tower of this church a man young and very odd, who was found as an orphan in a London cellar, put to school by a lady, and soon discovered to be a rich, rough gem? He says things from the tower which I would hardly dare to say from the pulpit, and yet he tells me that it was from the pulpit he got his first start in ways that are thought to be strange. His name is Adam Bell, and his talk is as quaint as his name. He does not often come to hear me preach, and when he does come he always finds fault with what he hears.

"You want to make things too plain," said he once; "as if people could be made to get the true sense of everything when really we understand nothing at all. We can pull a wing to pieces, but that does not explain flying; and we can cook a partridge, but that does not tell how the nightingale learned music."

"You live too much in the tower," said I; "you should come into the church and hear the preaching, and then you might get some good."

"I go in the church when you have all left it, and I talk a good deal to the pews and cushions. By-the-by, shall I tell you what a strange thing I saw in the church the other Sunday night? It made me creep all over, and sent a chill to my bones I have not quite got the better of yet."

"Tell me what it was."

"I came down quietly from the Tower and stole into the pulpit as soon as the doors were closed for the night. I heard the last key turn in the lock, and down I came as quietly as if my feet were made of feathers I had not been five minutes in the pulpit until I saw two faces at those semi-circular windows, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and, though it was night, I saw them as clearly as if it had been a sunny day. One of the faces was very awful, and the other was the most beautiful face I ever saw in my life: they were women's faces. Oh, how they looked over the whole place as if in search of somebody! They did not seem to see one another, or to know anything about one another. They might have been there five minutes only, but it seemed as if they were there five hours, and to my horror as they walked away I heard two women's voices say, *Adam Bell.*"

I told him it was a dream, and that in his vision he had seen the evil angel and the good that watch the life of every man.

"You should come to church, Adam," said I, "and hear the upward way explained."

"So you think," said he; "but I care next to nothing for preachers and preaching."

"Why not?"

"The last preacher I heard took the liberty of discussing God piecemeal; one sermon was on God's power, another on His wisdom, another on His goodness, and so on and so on. The learned prig!"

"But surely," said I, "you do not object to theological discussion?"

"After a dose of what you call theology I always read the parable of the Prodigal Son, to put the taste out of my mouth. Do you know I am writing that parable upon the west side of your tower, so as to catch the eye of all the men who come into the City? I tell you, sir, if you want to preach to the whole world, and not merely to the well-dressed end of one little parish, you must never go far from the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, and that poor woman who kissed Jesus Christ's feet, in the house of that glass-eyed, india-rubber-hearted pedant called Simon the Pharisee; I hate his very name,—an infinite charlatan, and a most detestable beast!"

"My friend," said I, "this is strong language to use about a dead man."

"He is not dead, and never will be dead! I see that horrible old Pharisee everywhere, watching and mocking the dear Christ, setting up his insane little problems, and smacking his lips when poor women go headlong to the devil."

"But," Adam Bell continued after a pause, "I will come to hear the prayer if you will excuse me leaving before the sermon; but it will be on condition that you pray as I tell you."

"Don't my prayers please you, then?"

"Nobody's prayers please me."

"How so?"

"They put God such a long way off, and talk to Him in such a roundabout and ceremonious manner. As soon as

ever I hear your Amen in the pulpit, I begin a prayer of my own in the tower. I pray for the people three and four at a time, and not for the whole congregation at once. I say: 'Lord, send many a pain with sharp teeth to bite that man who says to the poor, Be ye warmed and be ye filled, and keeps back the coal and the bread; Lord, send a ghost to frighten that man out of his wits who is going to sell a broken-winded horse for a sound one; Lord, keep that dear sweet-faced little girl from the deceitful and cruel plotter; and, Lord, help that man in the pulpit to speak all the truth, whether the pews are well-let or ill-let,'—that is the way my prayer runs."

I confess I thought this was a rough sort of man to have for a co-pastor, yet there was a good deal of sense in his blunt talk, and for the sake of the wheat I put up as well as I could with the chaff. The man in the tower always knows better than anybody else what to say and what to do. He thinks that being a long way upstairs is equal to being a long way towards heaven. He is apt to think that the garret is a good deal nearer the moon than the cellar; and, in fact, there is a sense in which that is quite true. Still I am willing that the man in the tower should remain where he is, and talk of everything that is in his heart. Now and then he may hit upon something that will suit our case very well, and now and then we may be able to show him how far he is wrong. As a minister, I court criticism rather than shun it, if thereby the truth of Christ may be made plainer. The preacher and the hearer ought to live in confidence and sympathy, aud this will be so when the hearer is quite sure that the preacher is talking

straight out of his heart the things that he most lovingly believes. In my heart of hearts I believe in the Son of God! I need Him every moment. His sweet words touch me as no other words ever did; they give me hope; they find me weak, and they leave me strong; they are a shield and buckler in the day of war. Lord Jesus, never forsake me! Lord, abide with me! In the pitifulness of Thy great mercy help me and save me, I humbly beseech Thee!

HOMILETICS.

Homiletics.

A MEETING of ministers and students is occasionally held in the City Temple immediately after the Thursday morning service, for the purpose of criticising outlines of sermons and discussing various questions bearing upon ministerial work. The following pages are made up of rough notes of what I have said at that meeting from time to time, in the hope of benefiting students and young preachers. It is understood that we are at liberty to speak with frankness, and that whatever is said is said in good faith. The meeting is absolutely undenominational. I do not know the names of one-tenth of the attendants, nor do I ever ask a question as to any man's Church relationships. I am bound to say, too, that I get more good than I give. The genial criticism, the felicitous suggestion, and the sound advice I have heard in that meeting, have helped me much in my study and my preaching. Distinguished ministers of our own and other countries have visited us, and have often given us the advantage of their criticism, and have left behind them many pleasant memories.

The Physiology of Preaching.

If you want to preach well you must pay some attention to what I may call the physiology of preaching. How do you *breathe*, for example? You should breathe through the nostrils, and never through the mouth. If you breathe through the mouth, you expose the throat to the cold air, and so you dry it and expose it to congestion. When you breathe, close the mouth, and inhale all the air your lungs can hold through the nostrils. Breathe *deeply*. Fill the lungs to their utmost capacity, and do this as often as possible in the open air. Some people never open their lungs to their full extent, and consequently they work with only half their power, and soon become exhausted. If I breathe properly during preaching, I am as little tired at the end as at the beginning. To do this you must *pause* in your sermon. People will of course say that you do this for effect. Never mind what people say; know what is right, and do it, and let time explain and justify you. Drink up the air! Let the chest heave again with the inflation: it is life, it is power! Make your lungs do their duty through and through.

How do you *speak?* Do you make a rumbling noise at the back of your mouth as if you had bronchitis and were smothering your bronchial tubes with cotton wool? If you speak with the wisdom of men and of angels, the cotton wool will beat you. Speak from the tip of the tongue. Use the lighter notes very much. The cry of a baby will be heard throughout the largest church, and

babies do not growl when they cry. And don't speak with your throat half-doubled as in reading very small type in a very dim light. Stand erect, and let the throat have room. If the chin be lifted to an acute angle, it may be so much the better. Of course people will call this theatrical, but don't you trouble yourself with their wise remarks. They have a kind of right, I suppose, to be insane if they like. The most eminent throat-doctor in England says that no Roman Catholic priest or High Church priest ever comes to consult him about a relaxed or sore throat. Their reason is that they *intone* their words, and so they save their throats a world of trouble. But imagine any of us intoning! Imagine me intoning in the City Temple! It would be theatrical, affected, inflated, pompous, dramatical, and generally semi-damnable, and so forth. Well, don't intone, but speak as if you had half a mind to do so, and then you will catch some of the lighter and finer tones that are in your voice.

And now let me ask you a third question. How do you use cold water inside and out? Do you drink half a tumbler of water at a time? That is a mistake. *Sipping* is the way for a speaker, and the way for anybody whose throat needs a tonic. Take a sip of *iced water* every five minutes if you want to have a throat to work with. It is better than spraying the throat with bromine, or inhaling pine oil,—both excellent things in their way, but not much needed by the man who *sips* iced water. If my throat wants a little special petting in a heavy service, I keep a little raspberry vinegar in the pulpit. Some discerning and agreeable people have observed this, and called the

coloured liquid claret. I have never corrected them, and I beg that you never will. Why spoil their omniscience? And as to the external application of water before preaching, there is nothing equal to the cold sitz-bath. Mark, *cold.* Not 70°, but cold as the weather runs. Give me that, and I am *physically* master of any congregation that ever assembled. I have come down to this place sometimes hardly able to stand, but one dip has made a man of me again. I have the most perfect bathing arrangements on these premises, and to them I owe no little of my comfort. First of all, take a good *foot-bath.* That is of great importance. Stand in cold water: if you get a block of ice, so much the better. Stand in it till the feet are red and numb. Having done that, sit down in another bath, and then get your bath man to pour a pail of ice-cold water upon the last joint of the spine, get him to rub you till you think he is tearing your skin off, and I guarantee you will preach with vigour and comfort. I do something like this every time I preach in the City Temple; and if I did not do it, the City Temple would soon be too much for me. I never preach with comfort out of my own pulpit on this very account. I believe in hydropathy *rightly administered.* But where is it rightly administered? I don't know. I have seen it administered in a most ignorant and shameful way, greatly to the cost of the unhappy patient. Is there a cloud upon your brow just before preaching? Lay a wet cloth on the forehead and the cloud will go! Is it not quite gone? Then the ice foot-bath will clear it off unquestionably. Don't doubt it, *try* it.

You will say, then, that I am very faddy about my preparation for the pulpit. So I am. I won't see any of my church officers before preaching. I will not speak to any one between my study and my pulpit. Sometimes very cordial strangers have stopped me in the street to ask me how I am. I have pointed silently to my throat and passed on! And I think I have my reward. I am sure I have it. And what I have proved, I now recommend.

I hold that it is as much our duty to prepare the *body* for the pulpit as to prepare the mind. Not that I care for mere bodily vigour in the pulpit, but because the body is the medium through which the mind has to operate; and if the instrument be in disorder, the musical expression will suffer. Besides that, the *ease* with which we do our work has a great deal to do with the comfort of those who hear us. When we are strained they are strained, and the tax upon their sympathy is so much withdrawn from their power of attention.

Another thing you should remember. Be as careful *after* preaching as before it. Never speak in the open air after preaching. Go home silently, sponge the throat and neck with warm water, and eat sparingly. If you be faithful in little things, you will be made ruler over many things. Nature is very sensitive and honourable in these matters. She gives you back all your care in amended strength and exhilarated spirits. She has done so in my own case, and therefore my testimony is as practical as it is grateful.

My prescription for what is called a "great effort"

in preaching, is this: Three weeks before the "effort" begin a series of Turkish baths—say two a-week; be on the hills every morning as soon as it is light,—if in summer, say by six o'clock; in the week of the "effort" take a plunge in the sea and several runs upon Beachy Head; on the morning of the "effort" take the foot-bath and the sitz-bath. And see the result! There will be freshness in your breath, a ringing tone in your voice, and a substance in your muscle not soon exhausted. You will not enter the pulpit as a clammy, flabby old man with a heckling voice and a wandering eye, but as a giant ready for a giant's task.

Some of you will say that your throats are so strong that you don't need any advice as to their maintenance. There you are wrong. I once thought as you did. I preached on the Sunday morning, preached in the open air in the afternoon, preached again in the evening, talked between the services and talked after them, and was no more Mondayish than a thrush. But I had to suffer for it afterwards. I had diphtheria; afterwards I had the uvula cut; and ever since I have had to coax my throat to do its work. I warn you, therefore, and entreat you, to be careful. "Prevention is better than cure."

Closely allied to this subject of physical preparation for preaching is the subject of clear articulation. I have touched upon this already. I have noticed in some of you an indisposition to open the mouth when you are speaking. In other cases the tongue seems to be used for the purpose of keeping the words back. Where there is any tendency to thickness of voice, speak slowly, as if putting the shadow

of a comma after each word. Do not imagine that loudness is clearness. Speak to someone sixty feet off; speak in a deep sonorous voice, and he will not hear you; speak in a light soprano, and he will hear every tone. It is not, however, enough to be heard; you must be effective as well as audible; you must lighten and thunder with the voice; it must rise and fall like a storm at times; now a whisper, now a trumpet, now the sound of many waters. There is an orator's voice, and there is a bellman's. The auctioneer talks; the orator speaks. You will, of course, meet many people, as I have done, who do not know one voice from another; to them it is enough if they hear so many words. Do not be discouraged. Singers have the same thing to complain of. Some day you will meet a man who has studied the human voice, who knows its mystery and loves its music, and his appreciation will reward and cheer you. You will notice that deaf people have an ugly way of sitting as far as possible from a speaker, and complaining that they cannot hear him! They are very annoying people these, and exceedingly ingenious in giving trouble to everybody.

[N.B.—I am only doing my duty in stating that *Hanford's Bronchitine* is absolutely invaluable for the cure of inflammation or congestion of the throat. I would on no account be without it.]

Preparation of Sermons.

Some of you have asked me from time to time to give you an idea of my own method of preparing for the pulpit. I hardly know how to answer you. For something like

ten years I never allowed a Tuesday morning to go by without sitting down to write sermons for the following Sunday. For some time, indeed, I was fortunate enough to have a week beforehand, so that I escaped those Saturday fevers which excite many preachers. Probably before Friday my two sermons were ready; written very largely, almost wholly in fact. I shall never lose the advantage of that prolonged discipline. As engagements have multiplied upon me, I have not been able to keep it up; still, it helps me to meet some difficulties that would otherwise be too much for me. There is one thing in which I have perhaps excelled all my brethren—an admirable thing, too, I call it—and that is in *repeating my sermons.* I have never hesitated to say to my people, "Next Sunday I intend to repeat the sermon you heard on such and such a day." By repeating it, however, I do not mean that I will use the same words altogether, but the same main thoughts; perhaps aided by a new illustration or two, still substantially the same sermon. I have not tried any little tricks upon the people in the way of changing the text or turning the divisions upside down, but have gone straight at the work of repetition in the most openly avowed manner, and then if I did happen to alight upon a new figure or illustration I got double credit for it. The people said, "It was not the same sermon after all; we noticed several new points in it."

My plan of preparing sermons is to fix upon a text and *compel* it to furnish a sermon. Some texts need compulsion, I assure you. I have written an introduction and got along pretty well as I thought, but when I came to the divisions

the text said, "I will not be divided!" Then I have been put upon my mettle, in the best sense. I said, "You *shall* be divided;" then has come a very rough division; never mind that, work away at it; get another division, never mind how commonplace, and make the most of it; then, if you like, lay the stubborn thing away for twenty-four hours, and at the end of that time begin the whole process over again, and you will find that it will come almost easily into your hand. Take that outline of mine on "Religious Help under New Circumstances." I don't know when I have had a harder fight over any text. I got through the introduction quite happily, and said to myself, "This will turn out well;" but when I came to map out the mainland the difficulty began. I got the first peg in pretty well, and then the text said, "No more will I give you;" but I was not to be put down. At last I got four points out of a text that was unwilling to give me even one. That has often been my case. Now I have become quite used to the subjugation of texts that are at first very imperious and off-hand. The only way (for me at least) is to write, write, write; keep on writing until you come to a point from which you get a view of open country, and throw away all you have written and begin from the line where the land began to show its features and extent. Sometimes I write myself clear into a subject, and then merely make a few notes for the pulpit, leaving the choice of words absolutely and unreservedly to the moment. Many a time I go into the pulpit of the City Temple without knowing one sentence I am about to utter. What my first sentence will be, or my last, or any

sentence between, I know no more than the door-keeper. Am I, then, unprepared? Far from it. I am prepared in body, by the process formerly described; I am prepared in mind, by knowing exactly the points I wish to establish and the line by which I wish to move; and I am prepared in heart by waiting lovingly upon God. I despise mere sentence-making. I do not wish to be a pretty phraseographer. I know well enough when the talk is jagged and rough all over, but I know, too, that oil runs off where acid bites. If I have to address a company of academicians, whole pewfuls of Aristotles, Ciceroes, and Euclids, I should wish to write every word, and to be very wary in the turn of every sentence; but to address an ordinary congregation, made up of all sorts of people, mainly struggling, tempted, tried, and broken-hearted, in a scholastic and formal composition is, in my view, to waste a great opportunity for doing good. There are sermons which make you feel that the preparation is the principal thing about them. Every sentence has been in a mould. There is no easy, vivid, graphic *talk*,—I don't mean gossip or twaddle, far enough from that,—all is measured, or finical, or stilted, something that is unnatural and uninteresting. I am going to say a bold thing. Sometimes the sermon is prepared but the preacher is unprepared. I have known men who could hardly read their own writing in the pulpit! To say that the sermon was not prepared would be incorrect, for there it is written out in full; but it may be quite correct to say that the *man* was not prepared. He was uncertain about his own thought, uncertain about his own purpose, uncertain about

his own writing; and uncertainty is of course inconsistent with full preparation. Prepare *yourself* as well as your *sermon:* let your heart be made to glow through long communion with God, and when the fire burns the tongue will speak with new and startling eloquence.

In preparing a sermon bring your congregation imaginatively around your desk. And don't write like a book, but like a speech. There is a literary style and there is also a talking style; try the latter, and force yourself to it. When I am writing a sermon, I read every sentence aloud over and over again, just as if somebody was sitting before me. My business is to make that somebody understand a certain thing, and I must put it so plainly that he *ought* to take in my meaning without any difficulty. Don't hurry your imaginative hearer. Say the same thing over to him without seeming to repeat it. Don't let him see that you are making a dead set upon his stupidity, but give him to feel that you are trying to make somebody else see the thing you are aiming at as clearly as he does. Believe me, the most of hearers are stupid. They want humouring; you must wait for them, you must stoop to them, you must coax them. See what an advantage you have over them, and be reasonable. For whole days you have had the subject before you, you have studied it in devout quietness; whereas they knew nothing about it until they heard you give out the text; and they could not throw off their cotton-spinning, their shop-keeping, their banking, and their farming, all in a moment. Give them time. Don't expect them to mount your rhetorical steed in a moment, and to canter up your homiletic hills.

Believe me, too, that a great deal of our homiletical art is lost upon our hearers. They don't live upon our nicely-cut outlines, but upon our wisdom, our sympathy, and our pathos. Suppose they should exclaim, "What a beautiful outline!" It is after all pretty much like exclaiming "What a beautiful frame!"—a poor compliment to the picture it preserves. It is better that they should know nothing about the mere outline; not know, indeed, whether there was any such outline; that the *soul* of the discourse should so fill their understanding and their heart that they have not a thought to bestow upon formal homiletics.

Some Difficulties in Preaching.

In looking forward to our meeting this morning, I thought it might be useful to say something about our special difficulties as preachers, and to look at one or two objections which are freely urged against us in our ministerial capacity. It is often said that the Gospel is a *proclamation*, and is to be treated as such in the pulpit. Now of course the Gospel *is* a proclamation, but it is something more; it is a doctrine, it is a sublime philosophy, it is a spiritual revelation; and the stated minister must know this and shape his ministry accordingly. It may be enough for the roving evangelist to expend himself upon a few texts, and go up and down the land calling men to repentance; this is right, and most beautiful, and should draw towards itself the prayers and hopes of all good men; but where a minister stands in the same place year after

year for most of a lifetime, he must not merely proclaim, he must expound and teach and edify. He is not at liberty to treat his people like infants; he must at all events give them credit for common sense and for a desire to grow in holy thought and purpose. Therefore he will probably preach many a sermon in which there is simply no proclamation (usually so called) at all, and which being heard by a casual listener will be pronounced anything but Gospel sermons. This is one of the difficulties of the pastor's position, and must be regarded as such. An old minister once wrote to me complaining that in a sermon upon the first chapter of Ecclesiastes I had not stated the doctrine of the Atonement. If an old *minister* can do anything so foolish, what will not an old layman do? Be faithful to your *text*, my brethren; give its true meaning, and bring out its distinct practical applications, and never mind the critics who are unjust.

Another difficulty I find in preaching is this. My hearers know as much as I can tell them about great Christian doctrines. After, say, a ten years' ministry, this ought to be true of a good proportion of them. And yet, perhaps, they want what they call originality, novelty of view, unexpectedness of vision amounting almost to a revelation. If they don't want it for themselves they make out that they want it for their children, and thus, in ways direct and indirect, there is a constant appeal brought to bear upon the minister, and possibly in his attempts to respond to it he must overstrain and disquiet his mind. You must resist such appeals. State the truth with all care, and throw into its utterance all the *heart* you can,

and do not fret yourselves because of men who talk of originality without really knowing its proper sense and application.

A third difficulty comes out of the *mixed* character of congregations. It is not easy to talk to a company made up of old men and little children; rich men who live in the heights of prosperity, and poor men who smoulder in the valleys of adversity; men of quick mind, and men of dull apprehensions; minds that see the end of a sentence as soon as they hear its beginning, and minds that can travel only at the rate of two miles a day. And look at the variety of moral moods: godly, impenitent, grateful, thankless, joyful, gloomy, tempted, distracted, peaceful, despondent, anxious, hopeful, and so on,—every possible phase of moral feeling represented in every congregation. How can any man be talking to them all at the same time?

A fourth difficulty is that of preaching when one does not want to preach. I tell you plainly that there are times when I go into the pulpit when I would gladly go ten miles the other way. But the "hour" comes, and the "man" must come along with it. And how often it happens that when one is in this anti-pulpit mood some man turns out to be in the congregation that one would have liked to have heard the best possible sermon: If he had only been there *last* Sunday morning what a treat he would have had! But, of all the days of the year, he must needs turn up when one is dejected, moody, and blurred very much in mind and heart. Has the devil anything to do with such coincidences?

In view of all these difficulties let me tell you that there

is nothing on earth so pitiless as a congregation or a crowd. What does a mass of people care for your ailments, your moods, your fits, your pains and groanings? Nothing! Every individual member of the crowd may be good-natured, but when hundreds of men get together they seem to lose all individuality of character and responsibility. Never throw yourself on the *indulgence* of a mob. It has none.

Have you ever noticed what a temptation there is to be *emphatic* when we are consciously weak, as if we would make up by a kind of mechanical fury what is wanting in true strength? In some cases this fury seems to trench very closely upon profanity. Some men, indeed, do swear a good deal in the pulpit. Imagine some of these men going into the worst parts of the metropolis and preaching in their peculiar fashion, their speech blazing and smoking with such expressions as "fiends," "hell-fire," "damnation," "infernal," "fire and brimstone," "undying worms," or preaching, as I once heard a man preach, "the devils will tie you down on fiery beds of hell and plague you through all eternity;" why, the dog-fighters, the drunkards, the libertines, the habitues of the Seven Dials and the dwellers in Bethnal Green might exclaim, "How hear we every man in his own tongue," the wonderful slang of the Church!

There is one preacher who really seems independent of all kinds of difficulties, and that is the climacteric man, or the man whose speech is a verbal cataract; start him over the precipice of his text and away he goes plunging, foaming, smoking, and splashing, in a way that is really

frightful. To get anything from him is very much like trying to get a mouthful of water at Niagara. You say there is surely water enough at Niagara, and I assure you that there is actually so much as to make it quite impossible for you to get any! Take your earthen porringer, or your silver goblet, and try to get it filled at that mighty cataract! It is very much the same with a certain style of speech. It rushes and foams and steams, and throws itself up in snowy mists, but refreshment there is none. You must go to the quiet rill if you are thirsty; you must have less if you would have more.

The Text Book.

If you want to preach well—that is, richly and instructively—you must know the Bible in its *wholeness*. A preacher is limited to one text-book, and that not a large one as regards mere bulk. He should, therefore, have a clear view of its scope, and not merely be clever in the treatment of particular texts. It is, you know, quite possible for a man to be very adroit in trimming texts and modernising ancient narratives, and yet to have little notion of what, for want of a better word, I may call the *genius* of the Bible. Such a man will not see revealed truth in its proper relationships; he will lose all that is valuable in perspective; and his ministry will become a series of exaggerations and theological deformities. In these free talks of ours you always allow me to refer to my own plans, so I may without impertinence tell you

how I act in the matter of biblical reading, or rather what course I take so far as circumstances will allow. I always try to tune the instrument in the summer. That is to say, I aim at reading the whole Bible right through in my holiday. Of course I cannot accomplish it, but I do what I can in that direction. Go on through book after book without pausing, read through the Pentateuch at a sitting, and insensibly you get into the *music* of the writing; you are moved by its sweet or rugged rhythm; and you are stirred by a new and mighty spirit. Do you quite catch my meaning? I don't mean that you are to read the Bible slowly through, say a chapter every day; far from that; read the great epistle to the Romans right through at once; do the same with the minor epistles, and the same with the Psalms. The other night I read the whole book of the Revelation. It is a grand thing that Apocalypse if you go over the entire course of it at once. There are glorious resting-places in it; evangelical oases, rich gospel plains. Beasts, dragons, locusts, vials, and so forth, you will meet in abundance, and they will bewilder you; but here and there, and again and again, so unexpectedly and sweetly, you will come upon quiet, rich glowing words full of Christ, with the shadow of the Cross upon them; which will make you feel that the man who wrote the book was under the Divine spell even when he set down things which are full of ruggedness and strange portent. The reading through of that weird book has given me a better idea of its meaning than ever I got from the consultation of commentaries upon particular texts. We ought, as preachers, to have the Word dwelling

richly in us. We should be *biblical* in the tone and purpose of our mind; then we should know more than the letter; we should have the mind of Christ.

In the next place, let me suggest to you that it is possible, under what I may call the direct inspiration of the biblical spirit, to become most expansive in our teaching; so much so, indeed, as to awaken the alarm of timid men who scrupulously bind themselves to the mere letter. A teacher may appear to be going beyond the Bible when in reality he is strictly developing and applying its most liberal statements. Take an illustration. The multiplication table is of course the basis of all multiplication, but what would be thought of a man who would not inquire how much is twelve times thirteen because the table distinctly ends at twelve times twelve? He might profess himself to be arithmetically orthodox because he begins and ends precisely with the table. He might shake his head with arithmetical sorrow at the man who by multiplying twelve by twenty was attempting to make himself wise above what was written. He might say, Why not be content to begin where the table begins and to end where the table ends? And why not wait until you pass into another world before inquiring into matters too high for you? The fact is, as you know, that twelve times thirteen is as really in the multiplication table as twelve times twelve; and that all possible arrangements of multiples are in that table, and that the table is not constructed as a limit but as a law and an example. It is so, with all needful differences, with the Book which we have to unfold. It is small, yet it is immeasurable in vast-

ness. It has a literal beginning and end, yet its spiritual applications are as wide as necessity and as enduring as life. In its treatment one teacher limits himself to the letter, another searches into the deep things of God; one talks to infants, the other talks to men; yet both may be perfectly right, though apparently so widely and vitally separated. The thing to be remembered is that the infant teacher should not damn the man who is getting into words with two syllables. I acknowledge that I have heard men preach who certainly seemed to be a long way from the theological multiplication table; as, for example, they were talking about "deep affinities," and "vital relations," and "recondite conditions," and "the *à priori* spring of the will;" I do not know exactly where they were, but they seemed to be a long way from home, yet to be enjoying themselves in a romantic kind of way,—somewhat grim withal, and solitary.

On Extemporaneous Outlines.

The texts which I gave to the students were first, "The thing was done suddenly" (2 Chron. xxix. 36), and second, "John did no miracle" (John x. 41). Sixteen outlines were put into my hands for examination. The peculiarity of the outlines is that they were written *impromptu;* they are, so to speak, off-hand outlines, making no claim to completeness and finish, but giving a general notion of each student's homiletical ability. I have had many opportunities of examining outlines of sermons, and I speak

deliberately in saying that the outlines submitted by your students are fully equal to the best I have ever seen. The men who wrote these outlines have, in my opinion, got hold of the right notion of sermon-making; and that, of course, is one of the very first things which a minister should have. He may be an excellent free-hand drawer, and even a tolerable player on the flute, but if he cannot *preach* he had better go back at once to something which he can do.

If I may pass from commendation to criticism, I would venture most respectfully to suggest that in every case the *introduction* is too long. The day of introductions, like the day of miracles, is gone. I have no objection to a beautiful carriage drive, but I do not care to find only a cottage at the end of it. It is unfair to the cottage itself, and altogether too ironical for practical life. I am astonished, too, that the students should have found time for such elaborate introductions, as some of them are evidently alive to the advantages of condensation, notably those who indicate John the Baptist by "Jno." I do not like that abbreviation. It may be superstitious on my part, but I must say that "Jno." has somewhat of an irreligious appearance, which might be tolerated in the margin as "a various reading," but not in the body of the text.

Two of the outlines are so startlingly alike in their openings that an unpractised eye might have mistaken the one for the other, and a suspicious and base-minded examiner might have turned the coincidence into an astounding immorality. It does not follow that the one outline, even in the point of striking similarity, was taken

from the other, though it is quite possible that they were both taken from a common source. Quite possible, if I may judge innocent students by practised preachers; but I am bound to say that if one sentence was copied from any author, living or dead, I never met with that sentence in the whole course of my reading. If some of the sentences are a little cloudy, it does not follow that the writers are heretics, or even "wolves in sheep's clothing." Many a cloudy morning has turned into a fine day. What is a young man worth if he cannot now and then bamboozle the acutest of his seniors? Why, his education would go for nothing if he could not perform so tempting a feat. I think a student, and even a minister, ought to be allowed, say every twelve months, to say something that nobody can understand. It would have a kind of college look about it.

If I may say a word to the students themselves, it would be first a word of hearty fraternal congratulation. Your outlines are truly admirable; they show a cunning hand and a long, shrewd head. May I ask a question? You can *write* a good sermon, but can you *preach* it? Many a man would find himself famous if he could get his sermons properly delivered by a brother who has not a tithe of his own intellectual power or theological erudition. Let me tell you that the people look at the manner as well as the matter of a sermon, and that part of your business is to meet the people on their own ground, and to find good china for good victuals. If your preaching is equal to your power of outlining a subject, I have no fear of your ministerial future.

To this word of congratulation I would add a word of respectful counsel, and I would endeavour to take the counsel which I ask your permission to give :—When you have got hold of a text, never try how hard you can make it, but how easy. I often imagine how the Apostle Paul would look if he could come without recognition to some of our services. To hear some short sentence of his cut up into sections, would be enough to make him cry out like the mother of old when Solomon proposed to divide the child with a sword. I am sure he would be surprised at many of the things which we credit him with having said, and he would modify his opinion of the "contemptibleness of his speech" if he could hear some of our long, resonant, procession-like phrases, which we say we somehow got from him. It is a pity so to talk Paulism that Paul himself would never recognise it. Paul was a sensible man, and I fancy he would have a high opinion of sensible preachers. Take care lest the people call out to us in our mist-making processes, "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?"

There is a kind of outline which is simply detestable, and all the more detestable because it is so clever, so sharp, so novel. I will give you a strictly *impromptu* outline, one about which I have not thought for a single instant, and I will be bound for it some people would think it very original. Text—1 Cor. ix. 24, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" The subject is evidently *Races*. (1.) Paul mentions the races without one word of condemnation; therefore it cannot be wrong to attend them. (2.) Paul says, "know

ye not?" as if he expected every one to be familiar with the races; therefore not to know about them is to fall under the apostolic censure. (3.) Paul says one receiveth the prize; therefore it is right to run for money, and inferentially it cannot be wrong to risk money on the probable winner. (4.) Paul gives his own testimony about the races; therefore it is right for ministers to make themselves acquainted with the recreations, enjoyments, entertainments, and amusements of the people. *Application:*—(1.) Have you a personal acquaintance with the races? (2.) If not, why delay? (3.) It is not enough to study the literature of the subject; nothing should satisfy you but a personal knowledge, and a deep, personal interest.

Brethren, you may smile at this outline, but take my word for it, the intentional exaggeration which I have adopted only enlarges the terrible viciousness which is unhappily characteristic of many actions which are applauded as very clever and most original. I care less and less about mere architecture in outlines. Let us find the simple meaning of the text, put it into modern words, and apply it to the immediate wants of our hearers, and our ministry will surely be blest. You have actual lives before you when you are standing in the pulpit; sinful, sorrowing lives; every heart bearing its own wound, every soul chilled and threatened by its own supreme fear; you have prosperity, adversity, age, and youth; and in Christ's Gospel you have a word for every one of them. Find that word. Pass it through the happy experience of your own hearts, and then utter it, not as it would be uttered

by a sceptic, but by a thankful and triumphant believer.

Your cleverness in striking off outlines may bring a snare with it. Why should such clever designers think about Sunday until late on Saturday afternoon? When men can say, "Let there be light," and "there is light," why should they be making tinder all the week long?

Let me frankly say, therefore, on what ground I commend so strongly the outlines I have examined; it is distinctly on the ground that you had so little time to spend upon them. If they had been put into my hands with the notice that you had had six weeks' warning and opportunity, I should have judged them by a very different standard; for what may be almost miraculous if done in a moment, may actually be commonplace and even contemptible if done in six weeks. Take my word for it, if you are to succeed in the ministry as preachers, you will want every minute you can secure for pulpit preparation. I do not mean for the getting up of fine sentences. I do not mean for word-play and word-dressing, a profane and blasphemous theatricalism, but for the understanding of your subjects, the getting into high and solemn tune all the powers, sensibilities, and affections of your nature, and the preparation of your heart to speak for men to the "great King above all gods." I can never be too thankful that through all the early years of my ministry I sat down every Tuesday morning to the preparation of next Sunday's sermons, and I allowed no other work to take me away until the sermons were ready for delivery. The benefit of that long-continued discipline I enjoy to-day. I am not

an extemporaneous outliner. This very morning I have written the substance of a discourse which will not be needed until next Sunday fortnight. If, therefore, I have attained any success in the ministry, and any honour in the estimation of my own people, it is, by the blessing of God, only the harvest of a busy and painful seed-time. There will come some weeks when you cannot make outlines or sermons. The mind will say, "No, not this week." What is, then, to be done? I answer frankly, If you cannot make a good new sermon, preach a good old one; or preach a sermon of the very best kind belonging to some other man. Why should we make sermons every week in the year when there are so many sermons ready-made to our hands? The sermons of Chalmers, and Wardlaw, and McAll, and Melville; the sermons of Robertson, and Bushnell, and Beecher; great sermons, like far-stretching acres of wheat standing in the glow of the autumnal sun. Preach them. Get them into your hearts, and preach them with all the enthusiasm of love, and at the end of every discourse give the immortal name of the immortal author.

THE END.

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